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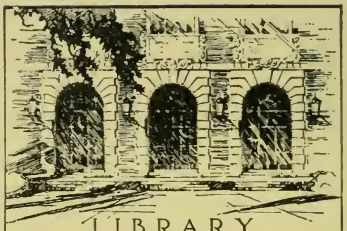

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MARIA,

A DOMESTIC TALE.

DEDICATED BY PERMISSION
TO HER ROYAL HIGHNESS
THE PRINCESS CHARLOTTE OF SAXE-COBURG.

BY CATHERINE ST. GEORGE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

London:
PUBLISHED BY J. PORTER, BOOKSELLER TO HER
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MARIA.

Mrs. Hunter had returned; Mr. Fisher had been buried a fortnight; and the family had resumed their usual occupations, —when the widow recollected the paper she had placed in her pocket from her husband's bureau. "I will go to my chamber," said she, "and call all my fortitude to my aid— I will peruse it."

It was not that Mrs. Fisher's anxiety respecting her daughter had experienced the least diminution, that she had so long neglected reading the paper; but her mind had been constantly occupied with matters that required her immediate investigation; not to mention the first days of grief that she felt on losing a man whom the world supposed to be a mere tyrant, that any wife

must have felt glad to be rid of:—but he had been the man of her heart, for whom she had felt affection as strong as perhaps had ever reigned in the breast of a woman. And some who have made human nature their peculiar study have said, that female attachments have this advantage over those of the other sex—that they are more lasting. When a woman of energetic mind loves a man, it is with enthusiasm she loves him: even great faults (though they may lessen) will never obliterate her fondness; because, in her heart he has an advocate, whose blindness renders conviction impossible.

The will had been read; and Mrs. Fisher had submitted to her situation with becoming propriety:—at the same time she felt that her husband had not acted with justice towards the poor Maria. When she perused the letter she had retired to read, the latter sentiment was much increased; it ran as follows:

"Copy of a letter inclosed to Mrs. Fisher; to be left by her with her infant daughter at

the A—— convent at Paris, in the year 1778, containing fifty pounds.

" *To the Superior of the A—— Nuns at Paris,* 1778.

" Madam,

" I guess what your astonishment will be at the moment you read this. However great it may be, it falls infinitely short of the feelings I labour under, in being obliged to part with my infant. Alas, madam, I am doomed to part with my darling! and the character I have everywhere heard of the piety of your house, and the vast regularity of your community, actuated by your excellent example, induces me to claim your protection for my only child. I dare not suffer her to return with me to her doting father, lest I should endanger a life miraculously preserved by the particular interference of Providence:—for know, madam, that when I was crossing the ocean prior to her birth, such a tremendous storm arose, that every creature resigned himself as lost.

I was on the way to France, on a sorrowful business that preyed on my spirits. In the moment of our most imminent danger, when we expected every rising billow to have split our shattered vessel, I felt the infant give a quick spring within me, as though *it* also felt the violence with which we were tossed. Impelled by a sudden impulse, I put myself as much as possible in a kneeling posture, and uttered this short but fervent prayer :—

" ' Almighty God ! Thou alone canst still the boisterous elements, as thou didst when thy Disciples, in a similar situation, called for thy help. I say, as they did, ' Save us, Lord, or we perish !' Thy power is as mighty now as it was then. Oh ! think not of our sins ! but in thy mercy save us ! We will, with thy help, amend our lives ; and the child, that by its motions also implores thy aid, shall be dedicated to thy entire service—male, or female, I will consecrate its life to thee.'

" My mind felt greatly relieved. But no

tongue can express my gratitude, when from that moment the roaring wind abated, and the waves became calm as the tranquil feelings of my own breast. My business is completed: my husband demands my return. I think I should commit a sacrilege were I to take Maria with me; therefore, dear madam, consider her as the child of Providence. I inclose fifty pounds for her immediate wants. Let her experience your tender care. On my arrival home you shall hear from me. O protect her! in the name of that God you hourly serve, and for the sake of her afflicted mother."

Scarcely could Mrs. Fisher keep herself from fainting during the reading of this copy, so different was it from what she had supposed it to have been: for Mr. Fisher had proposed to her that he should write the letter she was to leave with her child: she had received it from him sealed, and had given it in the same state, from the notion that Mr. Fisher wished to spare her feelings. Now her eyes were opened; she

was convinced that her husband, instead of writing in the manner he had told her, had planned a scheme to make the nuns suppose the child was intended to lead a cloistered life. He had also told Mrs. Fisher that the note was for two hundred pounds: here she saw it was only for fifty; and that the nuns had been led to expect remittances, which she felt nearly certain he had never sent. In short, so confused were her thoughts, that she was informed by her daughter that it was tea-time, and that Mrs. Hunter was in the parlour, before she was sufficiently collected to know what were her ideas either respecting her husband or her child. Her daughters and her friend perceived her to be much disturbed; and very soon she was so ill as to be obliged to go to her bed, which she did not quit during four days.

Mrs. Fisher's friends supposed her illness to have arisen from her late exertions; as she had parted with a servant, thinking it prudent to keep only one. She had also

begun to prepare for quitting the house she then occupied, for the small one bequeathed her by her husband. These arrangements, in the ideas of those about her, were the causes of her illness. Indeed they were right in guessing it proceeded from uneasiness, though wrong as to the cause.

During these four days Mrs. Fisher's mind underwent many revolutions. Once she thought her Maria must have remained in the convent, and was certainly a nun:—at another time she fancied that her daughter had embraced a life to which her disposition was averse; and that she had availed herself of the opportunity the Revolution offered to quit the convent, and had since become the mistress of the earl of U——. The latter idea was misery. She blamed herself as the cause of all this misery; and imagination painted her husband as suffering the bitterest torments for the guilty part he had acted. Distracted with the agitation all these circumstances produced, she suffered a paroxysm of grief; after which she

invoked the comfortable aid of religion :— her mind became more tranquil; and on the fourth day she had brought herself to a sufficient degree of resignation to form resolutions as to her future conduct. To accomplish this she roused herself to exertion, and resolved to adopt some immediate plan for ascertaining whether the lady she had seen was her daughter or not. For this purpose she thought her best step would be to write to Mrs. Stewart, and through her obtain the desired information.

When a person has suffered much and serious uneasiness, and it has subsided so far as to leave the mind able to form some determination, the hope this creates puts misery to flight. Such was the effect Mrs. Fisher now experienced, and which gave her strength and health to dine with her family on the fifth day.

Mrs. Hunter had lived in the house during her indisposition: she was strongly attached to Mrs. F—, and equally so to her daughters: indeed, she felt for them as a part of her

family, and had resolved, provided she outlived her friend, to be a mother to the girls. —After dinner, Mrs. Fisher continued to lead the conversation to that subject nearest her heart, *Maria*. She begged Mrs. Hunter would amuse her with an account of her late excursion, not having had leisure to make the inquiry sooner.

" I was as much pleased," replied Mrs. Hunter, " as you were yourself with the Isle of Man: the country is, I think, in many parts particularly picturesque, and the society, which your representation had brought me acquainted with, was very pleasant: I spent my time delightfully among your friends; and I think my fellow-traveller has the prospect of being much happier where I have now placed her, than she could have been in England. Mrs. Medcalf's is really an unexceptionable family: she is quite the gentlewoman, and her daughters are sensible and well-bred. I learned that the deceased Mr. Medcalf had lived very highly respected in Liverpool for several

years; that he had carried on the employment of a merchant there in a very extensive way; that he had acquired a large fortune, and had even a share in the banking-house of ——; but that a great speculation in raw cotton, which sunk in value 1*s.* 8*d.* per pound in the same week that the banking-house in London stopped payment, in consequence of the failure of another large banking-house,—had proved fatal to his credit and his property.—Mr. Medcalf had not a strong mind; the success he had hitherto met was rather the result of a long continuance of good fortune, than of talents; and as he had been a free-thinker in matters of religion (in which his indolence of disposition had suffered him to comply with the reasoning of others, rather than take the trouble of judging for himself), he was not calculated to act with fortitude or resignation; and, on the first hearing of his unhappy misfortunes, he gave way to the sudden impulse of his rebellious mind, and put an end to his existence, leaving his poor wife

to suffer accumulated miseries. She bore all with the resignation of a good Christian; and as soon as she was certain of the extent of her loss, finding the whole of her husband's property was insufficient to pay his debts, she voluntarily resigned her furniture, and all she possessed of valuables, to the creditors; and retired to the Isle of Man with her three daughters, there to live on her jointure of one hundred pounds per annum which had been settled upon her at her marriage.—I own I regretted that I had not a family, when I witnessed the attention of her children towards her:—they anticipate her wants, and seem really to forget their mortification in their anxiety to make her happy. I perceived the eldest had more haughtiness in her disposition than the others, on which account I felt more for her; for she tries to check her feelings: Poor thing! I admired whilst I pitied her struggles. We cannot help the seeds of evil being mixed in our mortal composition; but it is noble to conquer bad pro-

pensities. I heard several mention Mrs. Medcalf's children as a great burthen in her present circumstances, which I thought was reasoning very falsely—How truly miserable she would have felt, had she encountered her misfortunes alone, without any heart to share her sorrow, to pour balm into her mind!"

"You are right," said Mrs. Fisher: "I think I could meet any misfortune with tolerable resignation, so long as I had a husband or child who shared my feelings; but I doubt, were I alone, I should be weak indeed.—But this is a melancholy theme,—How was Maria when you left her?"

"Quite reconciled, as to herself," replied Mrs. Hunter; "but as anxious about you as if she had been your daughter. Her last words were, 'I shall not be settled until I know how Mrs. Fisher does.' She was quite delighted with Mrs. Stewart for telling her she was very like you."

"Have you the smallest idea she resembles me?" asked Mrs. Fisher.

"That did not strike me when first I saw her," said Mrs. Hunter; "but as her features became familiar, I often thought I saw a strong resemblance."

At this period of their conversation Mrs. Fisher grew exceedingly pale: and her friend, thinking her fatigued, insisted on her lying on the bed; which Mrs. Fisher was more ready to do, that she might take an opportunity of examining her own countenance, and compare it with what she recollected of Maria's. Vain was this trial. Mrs. Fisher looked in her glass—then considered—then looked again; but was forced to acknowledge that nothing is so difficult as to remember a face:—as the face of a friend it may be well stamped on the mind; yet, when compared with one that is present, memory fails in analysing absent features.

When Mrs. Fisher was left, as her friends supposed, to sleep, her daughters and Mrs. Hunter were lamenting her altered state of health; and every one secretly regretted that Mr. Fisher had constrained her to live in

London, thinking change of air and scene might have been serviceable:—but this regret each indulged silently—respect for their departed father and friend prevented one discontented word to escape their lips.

Mrs. Hunter resolved to spend one more night with Mrs. Fisher, with whom she avoided any conversation on past events, and tried to talk of other matters which were indifferent to all. So well had Mrs. Fisher organized her thoughts, that she had the appearance of being more tranquil than she had shown herself since her husband's death. Indeed, to such a degree had she conquered her feelings, that Mrs. Hunter proposed returning to her own house; having first extorted a promise from Mrs. Fisher that, should she wish her company, she would immediately send for her.—Mrs. Fisher thanked her friend sincerely for this proof of attachment, and promised not to be backward in accepting her kind offer. And about eight that evening Mrs. Hunter left Sloane-street for Grosvenor-square.

The young ladies grieved to lose her; but Mrs. Fisher felt relieved at her absence: she wished to be alone, that she might have leisure to arrange her future plan respecting Maria. As soon, therefore, as her friend had departed, she proposed going early to bed; and after their usual custom of family prayer each retired to her chamber.

Mrs. Fisher again addressed herself to the Great Director of events, and prayed for his divine assistance to inspire her with the resolution to practise what might be best. She recalled to her mind such actions of her life as had been of importance in their consequences; she lamented, with all the sincerity of her soul, that fatal error of having concealed her child from the world; and so earnestly did she grieve, that her sobs had brought her daughters to her bed-side ere she was aware of her action. Their anxious inquiries roused her from her grief; and she beheld them close by her curtain, when she found she had defeated her own purpose for that time; as no entreaties

could induce her children to leave her that night.

Mrs. Fisher inwardly blamed herself for giving way to sorrow, when she felt that she ought to have used all her exertion to act rather than to think. She prayed for fortitude—she obtained it. Her spirits became tranquillized, and she got into a sound sleep, from which she did not awake until eight next morning. Much refreshed with this repose, Mrs. Fisher arose quite equal to write a letter to Maria, which she thought would be a preferable mode to that of addressing Mrs. Stewart.

LETTER XIV.

TO MISS PROVIDENCE, MRS. MEDCALF'S, DOUGLAS, ISLE OF MAN.

I SCARCELY know in what words to inform my young friend of the events which have occurred during the last six weeks. Mrs. Hunter told you of the dreadful loss I and my children have sustained. It is a theme on which I cannot write; yet it is the one I am most inclined to write upon. You knew but little of Mr. Fisher, and perhaps that little did not lead you to love him as I wish you should have done. His manner was austere, and it appeared more so to those who were but lately acquainted with him. Twenty years ago he had a heart full of sensibility; then he was alive to all the finer feelings;—latterly the ingratitude of man had so far altered him that he tried not to feel.—'Why,' methinks I hear you say, 'does Mrs. Fisher wish me acquainted

with the nature of her husband's heart?'—I answer, 'Because I would have you revere and love his memory.' Our last conversation nearly concerned you. I will not anticipate—you shall be made acquainted with that conversation—but not yet. Forgive the incoherent expressions of one who was so lately a wife, and who is now a miserable widow.

I have a request to make which you will perhaps think singular. But when I tell you that a near relation of mine is interested, you then will allow for it.—The last time I had the pleasure of seeing you, I had a glimpse of a child's cap wrapped up with something else;—would you indulge me with a sight of those articles, or with so minute a description as should amount to the same as the seeing them? it would relieve my mind of much painful anxiety. A relation of mine did send her infant to the very convent you inhabited; and some circumstances agree so exactly relating to that infant and yourself, that I am tempted to hope you may prove

to be that child. What happiness would this be to her who is nearly connected! My dear young lady, pardon me, it is possible that on reading this your feelings may be unpleasantly agitated—perhaps irritated—that I should thus pry into the secrets of your life. Believe me, I am not prompted by idle curiosity. No, dear lady: should I find, on examining the articles I am so anxious to see, that they did not belong to the child of my friend, I would drop the subject for ever. At all events, I cannot promise to cease to love you:—so rooted is my partiality, so much does it gain upon me, that I could sooner banish my affection for my children (and no parent ever loved her offspring better) than I could discard you from my heart. If affection, as it is said, really begets confidence, I may hope to induce yours. Pray, when you answer this, inform me how you like your situation, and what society you have been able to form. Mrs. Hunter tells me that you are with an amiable family, and are likely to

have agreeable companions in the young ladies of the house. This intelligence pleased me much :—to have a cheerful home is preferable to cheerfulness abroad; the one you have within yourself; whereas if you had to seek it elsewhere, you would often be disappointed, and probably have to encounter temptations which to the strongest mind sometimes prove fallible. My experience in life urges me to give advice which I hope your good sense will attribute to the right motive—an earnest wish for your happiness. I know young minds are prone to be communicative :—a heart pure and innocent, that has no feeling of which it ought to be ashamed, finds a secret charm in imparting its various sensations to a kindred heart, where reciprocity of ideas and feelings renders the intercourse delightful, and makes it a sort of injustice to conceal a thought. I have felt this happy acme of female friendship; and felt, also, that I indulged it too extensively, and that in after years I wished I had not done so. Yours, my dear young

lady, has been rather an adventurous life; curiosity alone would find ample amusement in your tale, and perhaps draw from you more than prudence would wish you to relate:—forgive then this hint upon a subject which possibly may prove serviceable.

My daughters request you will accept their remembrance; they are often regretting that their acquaintance with you was so short, and still more that it is not likely to be renewed during your residence in the Isle of Man, as I have been prevented taking any long journeys by rather a strange clause in my husband's will, signifying 'that I shall not absent myself more than ten days from London, under the pain of forfeiting my jointure.' This I think a hard condition, merely because it prevents my making one excursion that I had set my heart upon. But as I am convinced the sole reason for the clause was *to prevent that one*, I submit—but not cheerfully, as I should have wished to have done, to all Mr. Fisher's requests.

Adieu, my amiable young friend! Please

when you see the Stewarts to make my best and kind respects to them. I am almost surprised I have not heard from Mrs. Stewart, and hope she is well. You cannot oblige me more than by giving an early answer to this, and particularly to the request I have ventured to make. And allow me to assure you that you have not one who esteems you more than your sincere friend,

MARIA FISHER.

When Mrs. Fisher had herself put the above letter in the post-office, she determined to wait patiently the answer. Yet though her mind was resolute she found it very difficult to appear tranquil, not being able for a moment to discard the subject from her thoughts: but she had great fortitude, and performed all her various duties as though her mind had been occupied only on her employments. The end of the following week found her fixed in her small house in Sloane-street; and the other advertised to be let.

One morning a gentleman introduced

himself, in consequence of having read the advertisement. This was no other than Mr. S—— the messenger, who wished to take the house for his near relative. No sooner had he told his name, than Mrs. Fisher's ideas reverted from the house to the happy chance this seemed to offer of getting a letter conveyed to the convent; as the war had utterly checked her plan of writing, from the great uncertainty how she should send it; and she resolved not to suffer the gentleman to leave her without making him acquainted with her request.

Mrs. Fisher showed the greatest alacrity in equipping herself to accompany Mr. S—— to view the premises. He proposed her sending the servant, thinking it might possibly hurt her feelings to go over the spot where she had so lately lost her husband. In secret he wondered at the readiness with which she undertook the task. He was no less surprised at her promptitude to every little alteration he wished; and drew conclusions from Mrs. Fisher's conduct which

were no ways favourable, and of which she was totally undeserving. As soon as the business of rent, &c. were fixed, and the day appointed for the new tenant to enter, Mr. S—— politely said he would see Mrs. Fisher to her door and then take his leave. She instantly seized the opportunity to prefer her request, that he would convey a letter for her to Paris.—At first he seemed at a loss, as wavering whether to grant it. He assured Mrs. Fisher that he had refused taking letters for some of his most intimate friends, spoke of the improbability of its reaching the army after he should part with it; "for I doubt not," said Mr. S——, "you wish to inquire after some near relative in our victorious army?"

"No, sir," replied Mrs. Fisher, "I do not know that I have any relative in the army; my letter will be to one of the nuns in the A—— convent at Paris. I have long wished for the opportunity of inquiring after a near relation there."

Mr. S—— with great politeness now as-

sured Mrs. Fisher that her letter should be inclosed witl. his own, and that she might depend upon his punctuality in sending his own servant with the letter as soon as he should reach Paris. Mrs. Fisher tried to express her gratitude; and Mr. S—— took his leave, telling her to let him have the letter the next evening, as he should leave London on the second morning to sail with the first fair wind.—Mrs. Fisher appeared in better spirits that day at dinner than usual, which her family attributed to the circumstance of her having let the h[illegible]. The evening passed off with unusual cheerfulness; for she had determined to lay by the subject until the hour of rest, and in bed to frame the letter which she resolved to write the next morning.

LETTER XV.

FROM MRS. FISHER TO THE ABBESS OF THE CONVENT OF A—— NUNS AT PARIS.

Madam,

London, Sloane-street.

Mr. S——, our British messenger, has favoured me by taking charge of this letter, which I have now the honour to address to you, relating to some business which took place in the year 1778, when the late abbess was in office.

A child about two years old was sent in that year to your house, and with it a letter in its mother's name. I was not the writer of that letter, nor did I know its contents until about two months back; when, by the death of the lady's husband, a copy of that letter came into my possession, with a bequest of one hundred pounds to the abbess of the A—— nuns, which I shall take the earliest opportunity of forwarding after I shall have received it from the executor.

As a near relative of the young lady, I hope, madam, you will not think it impertinent that I request a particular account of her. I entertained a great and sincere regard for her parents, and feel strongly interested in her welfare. From the letter which accompanied her, I should suppose that she is now become one of your community. By the copy of that letter I see her name was Maria:—sincerely do I wish that she may have conducted herself conformably to your advice; and beg, dear madam, that you will favour me with an early answer. Mr. S—— is so polite as to say he will take the charge of it. Be pleased to inform me into whose hands you would wish the legacy of one hundred pounds to be paid.

Requesting that you will remember me in your good prayers, I have the honour to remain, madam, Your obedient and very humble servant,

MARIA FISHER.

Mrs. Fisher having taken every method in her power to ascertain the truth respecting the object of her anxiety, felt her mind more easy than it had been for some years past; and knowing that the performance of the duties peculiar to her situation was the most likely method to procure internal peace, she turned her whole thoughts to the future arrangement of her family—Here the principal circumstance, and which appeared to her of the greatest consequence, was the education of her two daughters.—During the first twenty years of her life Mrs. Fisher had mixed in polite society, and had often made one in the higher circles of fashion, where she had acquired a refinement of manners and sentiment which never forsook her. The happiness she had experienced, during the vicissitudes of fortune, from her own enlarged ideas, made her wish she could impart the same quality to her daughters;—But how was this to be done? The circle where she had spent her youthful days was closed to her; for, from her own peculiar

method of acting, she had married, both to her first and second husband, out of that sphere: and as a woman's rank always rises and falls with her husband, she had become partly forgotten by her former friends; Mrs. Hunter being the only one who had retained the same regard for Mrs. Fisher through every part of her life and all its various changes.

These ladies were equally opposite in their dispositions and habits. When young, they had been schoolfellows; and after quitting school had passed their time in the same places and the same society until Mrs. Fisher married; and then Mrs. Hunter's attachment was of that sincere kind as never to feel a diminution of regard towards Mrs. Fisher, though her opinion and that of her friend were generally different on most subjects. Mrs. Hunter possessed a good useful understanding, without any of those brilliant talents or violent feelings which so often mislead the possessor. When I say she had no brilliant talents, I do not mean that

she was unaccomplished: she had acquired every quality requisite in an elegant female; but she had acquired them from principle, and practised each with moderation. As her feelings were not acute, her heart never drew her out of the right road; she did every thing prudently, and from the pure principle of right. Her friend, on the contrary, possessed brilliant talents, but with feelings so enthusiastic, and an imagination so unsteady, that she had gained a general knowledge of many accomplishments, without excelling in one:—her capacious mind grasped at knowledge; but her pursuits varied with her mind, and she was without solidity, except in her attachments—there she was unchangeable. As if to make up for the faults of an unstable disposition, nature had endowed her with such generous feelings for her fellow-creatures, that her heart was the seat of benevolence, and she was incapable of a sinister thought. Such were these two ladies. The prudence of Mrs. Hunter had acted as a guardian angel in preventing the

eccentricities of Mrs. Fisher; whilst the latter had looked up to the virtues of her friend with veneration, and almost with fear. One secret only had existed between them: but as Mrs. Hunter did not suspect that secret, the truest esteem had subsisted to the present day.

Thus situated, it was natural that Mrs. Fisher should, in the dilemma respecting her daughters, have recourse to Mrs. Hunter's advice. On this account we find her ready to go to Grosvenor-square. So telling Frances and Emma she wished some private conversation with her friend, she left them to dine by themselves. Mrs. Hunter was alone, and welcomed Mrs. Fisher with more than her wonted cordiality, saying, "Now, my good friend, you give me pleasure to see you thus exert yourself: such a walk as this every morning would do you good."

Mrs. Fisher thanked her. Always in haste, from the quick impulse of her feelings, to communicate her thoughts, she immediately entered on the motive of her visit: and

after explaining to Mrs. Hunter all the *pros* and *cons* relating to her situation, she finished with, "Now, my good friend, tell me truly, whether you think me capable of taking upon myself the task of education? However, allow me to remark that I am no longer that volatile being you have hitherto known me:—misfortune has completely changed my ideas: the only pleasure I now propose to myself is to live with my children,—their happiness shall be my study; and I think that if I could lay down a plan, teach them what I am myself acquainted with, and implant religious thoughts into their minds, they may become better women than they would in all probability be by sending them to a public seminary; and which, in fact, my income will not allow me to do without distressing us all."

Mrs. Hunter was much pleased, and replied; "My dear friend, your resolution gives me real pleasure. I am convinced that in practising what you now propose you will find the greatest satisfaction that you

can enjoy in this world. I know the satisfaction which arises from acting well, and I am sure that the delight which a parent feels in superintending her children must be superior to any other. With respect to your abilities, my dear Mrs. Fisher, they are greater than you yourself are aware of: for indeed you have never yet done justice to yourself; and to give you all the assistance in my power, I will impart to you a plan which I did not at present mean to make you acquainted with. I wish to take a share in your labours:—but give me your word that you will not inform your daughters,—I have good reasons for the request."

Mrs. Fisher having promised to do nothing against the wish of her friend, Mrs. Hunter thus proceeded:—"It has always been my intention to leave the sum of one thousand pounds between your two girls. Without the present conversation this would have been a legacy out of the five per cents. —the only alteration I shall now make will be, that from this day the interest of it shall

be employed for their use. You shall engage a drawing-, music-, and writing-master to attend them: you shall pay them out of the interest yourself; and if any of it remain, we will manage it for them till I shall be no more: or, if God spares me so long, till some good man require the principal of me, which I should most cheerfully pay. Frances is now fourteen and Emma twelve years old: they are sweet amiable children; they will be comforts to you; and if we both live, I will, with your permission, introduce them into the world: and I assure you, from the amiable disposition of each, I expect to feel very proud of my young friends. But I particularly wish they should remain ignorant that I am any thing more than a friend;—let me enjoy their friendship as their voluntary gift, unchecked with any tie but the impulse of their own innocent hearts."

Mrs. Fisher was at this moment so overpowered with gratitude, that she was ready to expose to her friend that secret which she had so strenuously striven to guard from

investigation. The next minute would have betrayed it, had not the servant announced that dinner was already upon the table. A hasty remove to the eating-room closed the conversation for that time; and Mrs. Fisher felt an inward charm, on reflecting that she was still mistress of a mystery which it was her interest not to betray.

When the cloth was removed the ladies again entered on the subject of education, which they discussed in all its branches. Mrs. Hunter displayed much useful knowledge, and Mrs. Fisher willingly conformed to most of her opinions; for she had now regained her recollection, though her gratitude had no ways abated towards her friend and future benefactress.

Time passed pleasantly till eight o'clock, when Mrs. Hunter ordered her coach and accompanied her friend to Sloane-street. Upon entering her house, Mrs. Fisher found every thing in that neat order which her daughters knew she liked. Frances and Emma welcomed her return with all those

nameless attentions with which a happy mother is always received by good children. They retired at a later hour than usual; for Mrs. Fisher had the pleasure of informing her daughters of the manner in which she hoped to pursue their instruction; and told them that Mrs. Hunter would lend her carriage to her the next morning for the purpose of making the preparatory purchases, and to seek masters in some branches where she was deficient. The girls became as sanguine as their mother. But Frances, naturally more prudent than her sister, ventured to ask whether the expense would not be too great an inconvenience? to which Mrs. Fisher replied, that she and Mrs. Hunter had been calculating every thing, and found that, by being very saving in all other matters, this plan might be followed without inconvenience. And Frances and Emma, ever accustomed to regard their mother's decisions with respectful compliance, did not suffer their minds to harbour a thought which could militate against a plan so evi-

dently intended for their benefit. A fine morning was hailed by all three as a presage of future good fortune: and a fortnight had been spent in putting up desks for their writing and various arrangements, when their little seminary opened with every prospect of success which the skill and willingness of the teacher, and the prompt obedience of the pupils, could ensure.

The school had continued a month: Mrs. Hunter had spent some of her pleasantest hours in giving her friendly assistance; and the young ladies had already made as much progress as time and possibility would allow—when a gentleman called, charged with a large parcel for Mrs. Fisher, which he said he had promised Mrs. Stewart to deliver into her own hands; and he was happy to have it in his power to acquit himself so soon, having left the island last Wednesday night, and this was only Saturday evening.

No sooner had the gentleman taken his leave than Mrs. Fisher retired to open her packet, which she was surprised to find con-

sisted solely of papers. The first was in the hand-writing of Mrs. Stewart. Fearful of reading something which might greatly affect her, she locked up the whole of them, determined to forbear perusing them till her daughters had retired to rest; secretly rejoicing that Mrs. Hunter had not been present when the gentleman called. On Mrs. Fisher's returning to the parlour, Emma asked her mother if she had much news in her packet? which she answered by saying, as they were only Manks newspapers, she had laid them apart till she should have more leisure and inclination to peruse them. This silenced the young people, and before they had got into bed they had nearly forgotten the circumstance.

Mrs. Fisher upon entering her own chamber began to inspect the contents of her parcel, and found all her feelings called into action on reading the following.

LETTER XVI.

FROM MRS. STEWART TO MRS. FISHER.

Dear Madam,

Douglas.

NOTHING but illness should have prevented my writing to you long ago, to express the regret I felt at hearing of your loss. Letters of condolence from merely indifferent people, on occasions such as yours, are only troublesome: but the truth is, from your friendly conduct towards me I should have ventured to express my feelings, since I really did feel for you as for one of long acquaintance. I have been for the last two months such a martyr to the rheumatism in my head, that this is the first effort I have been able to make at any employment; and perhaps you will be surprised when I tell you, that you and our mutual young friend, Maria, have wholly engrossed my thoughts whenever I had any interval of

ease. Mr. Stewart urged me to let him write: but that I did not like he should do, because I have to acquaint you with circumstances relating to our young friend, of which I intend he should remain ignorant. Upon Maria's settling at Mrs. Medcalf's, I resolved not to inform my daughters of the unfortunate circumstance of her having resided with the Earl of U——. If I had mentioned it, I could not have palliated her offence—I could not have allowed *them* to cultivate her acquaintance. On the other hand, so long as her conduct proved every way correct, I wished to encourage her in goodness; and whilst I could be certain that the sincerity of her repentance made her desirous to reform, I felt it my duty, as a Christian, to assist her. So I talked to Mr. Stewart on the subject: and we concluded to suffer the cultivation of an acquaintance which might benefit Maria without injuring my children. You may easily suppose that here, where we are obliged to limit our society, the few young persons

who do meet, court each other's company with greater avidity than where the circle is more extensive. The Miss Medcalfs are most deserving women; and the two families meet nearly every day. At the period when my illness began, Maria showed the greatest anxiety on my account: she offered to sit with me by night and by day: her attention was so unremitting, so pleasing, yet so perfectly polite—that she stole on my affections, until really I found myself uneasy if any circumstance retarded her visit at all beyond the usual hour. When I grew better my spirits were low, and I could not bear to have more than one person in the room at a time. I wished my daughters to amuse Mr. Stewart, and felt soothed by the gentle voice and manners of their substitute, as Maria called herself. As her face became more familiar to me, I thought I saw a likeness to the youthful Maria we had spoken of as residing in the convent; and one day, I told her of the likeness. Her colour changed from red to

pale : and seeing her affeeted I dropped the subject. A few days after, she took the opportunity of the absence of my family, who were engaged with company below, to say, " Do you really think me like the lady you named the other morning ?" " I do indeed," said I, " think you a striking resemblance of her—but you know people often fancy they see likenesses. You do not seem pleased to be told of this; so I'll endeavour to forget the whim I had formed, and say no more about it." She regarded me with a scrutinizing look, and said " Suppose I were that person—would the knowledge of it deprive me of the honour of your notice ?"

" Certainly not," I replied. " But you would then allow, that the situation which you held in the convent, and the one in which I first knew you here, are so opposite, that it would puzzle me to guess how the same person could have filled both stations."

" I am glad, dear madam, that any circumstance should have occurred to lead to the avowal ' that I am that person.'

When your health will permit I will explain every thing: and I hope, when you are fully acquainted with all particulars, you will then acquit me of the crime of which I shudder to think I am supposed to be guilty. But we will drop this subject until you are better; only promise not to name the discovery till you hear more of me."

The caution, I assured Maria, was needless. A few days passed without any opportunity: but the next that offered, Maria seized, to say, "I am now more than ever, dear madam, desirous to impart to you the occurrences of my life: I have received a letter from my kind friend Mrs. Fisher, which so intimately relates to the subject we were speaking upon, that I am resolved not to answer it till I have first obtained your advice."

"My good girl," I replied, "I am sufficiently well to give all my attention to your story. But if it will take time, I had rather you would write it; as we shall not

now have the opportunities of remaining together which we have had."

Maria said that her narrative was mostly contained in some letters; she would write one more herself, and bring the parcel to me.

I here inclose it. In one of the letters you will find the cap and robe you wished to see. I am desired by Miss Providence to say, that her feelings are too much interested for her to write at present. Indeed I pity her anxiety. From the moment she received your letter, her alternate hopes and fears relative to the probability there now appears of her knowing her parents, and the chance that she is nearly allied to you, (a circumstance from which she seems to derive the greatest of all her pleasures,) have so agitated her frame that she cannot settle to any thing for the space of five minutes. I will not anticipate Maria's interesting story by making one comment of my own. I will only claim your patience,

to request you will put an end to her anxiety as soon as possible, and to beg you to be assured of the esteem and affection with which I shall ever remain, dearest madam, your obliged friend and servant,

ELIZA STEWART.

P. S. This goes by Mr. G——, who means to return in three weeks, and if longer detained, I have requested he will inform you; as it would be a good opportunity of returning the robe, &c. for our poor friend seems to think it a robbery to deprive her of them, never having parted with them before; nor do I think she would now, to any other being in the world than to yourself.

Having perused Mrs. Stewart's letter, Mrs. Fisher opened the other inclosure. The first writing that attracted her notice was Maria's. This however she passed over, and every other; till seeing an envelope marked No. 1,—1778, she opened it; and there found, not only a cap and robe, but

a letter which proved exactly the same as the copy which Mrs. Fisher had taken out of her husband's bureau. This was certain demonstration. But she still looked for evidence in the clothes—having herself worked *M. F.* on the lace of the cap and robe. Others had taken these marks for the lace pattern; but she had them stamped on her heart, and well knew every stitch to have been her own.

Mrs. Fisher, having now proved beyond all doubt that Maria was indeed that child for whom she had spent so many anxious years, was overpowered by the confusion of her ideas; which were composed of affection, self-reproach, and maternal joy. Such a state was she reduced to, that the first object that recalled her scattered thoughts was the table before her, spread with the various papers. It was broad day-light—her watch pointed to eight o'clock. In the greatest astonishment she endeavoured to recollect herself; and did so sufficiently to be sensible that these letters were the con-

tents of the parcel of the former evening;—the rest seemed the transient shadow of a dream, the principal feature of which that remained fixed upon her mind, was, that Maria was really her daughter! She hastened to conceal the papers in the very bureau which had been her husband's repository, resolving to leave them there till the hour of rest. She then offered up her earnest thanksgiving that her child was living,—that she had herself seen her:—but a pang of anguish struck her heart, when she thought of the situation in which she had first met Maria; and she tried to be resigned to the affliction, by mentally acknowledging she deserved this grief.

When Mrs. Fisher summoned her family, as was her custom, to morning prayers, her daughters questioned her with anxious looks as to her health; for her pale and languid countenance showed that she had suffered. They begged that she would give herself no further trouble about them for that day,

than to tell them what she wished to have done, and to allow one of them to accompany her to Grosvenor-square; thinking, that to pass the day with her friend would be a means of restoring her spirits: for it being six months that day since the death of her husband, the girls attributed the present indisposition of their mother to the recollection of him.

Mrs. Fisher had felt herself quite unequal to the routine of school business, to avoid which she very willingly followed her daughters' advice, and proceeded to Mrs. Hunter's as soon as breakfast was over. Arrived there, she had new difficulties to encounter; for she found that to be with an intimate friend when her heart was labouring under the weight of its own calamity,—and that calamity of such a nature as to preclude communication,—required an exertion of spirits which she was nearly sinking under; and at five o'clock she became so ill as to request Mrs. Hunter's carriage

to convey her home, where she was three days confined to her room. And it was not till eleven o'clock on the fifth night that she was able to resume the inspection of the papers, which were numbered. Of course she began with No. 2.

LETTER XVII.

FROM MISS PROVIDENCE TO MRS. STEWART.

Douglas.

YOUR indulgent kindness, my dear madam, on every occasion since I have had the honour of knowing you, has encouraged me to confide to you the events of my life. From the day I first saw you I wished to do this; but without the many instances which I have experienced of your indulgence, I should have forced myself to silence. Now that your goodness has desired me to speak, I do it with the greater pleasure, from the hope that, blameable as I feel my conduct to have been, in suffering myself to appear the guilty creature you first thought me, yet when you learn the motive which actuated me, even you will think it a palliation in my favour.

I will pass over in silence the first years of my life: they were spent in the happiest

manner. It was true I had never been beyond the convent gate; nor had I felt a wish beyond that gate, until I had attained my thirteenth year. However, the first to me memorable day, was that which counted eleven years from the time I had been left in the convent; and I was supposed to be two years old at the period of my first appearance there. During all that interval I had experienced every kindness: the good nuns took all imaginable pains to cultivate in me the tenets of the Catholic religion. I heard myself universally styled the Child of Providence. My dress was entirely white, in honour of the Virgin Mary: I was shown to every person who entered their precincts; and I considered myself as a sacred property, belonging in some degreee to the Virgin, whom I regarded as my special patroness. On this day, which I before remarked, I had made my first communion; —an epoch which ought deservedly to be remembered: from that period I was to have the honour of ranking with the ladies of

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the first class, and to enjoy all their privileges. In the afternoon of this day, so properly selected for making lasting impressions, I was summoned to a private interview with our good abbess; which I attended with a light heart and a willing step, saying as I went along, "This summons cannot be to chide me for any thing to-day, it is to give me some advice,—perhaps to make me a present; if so, I will keep it as long as I live."

A gentle voice then called me; and on opening the abbess's door I found her alone. Presenting me her hand she said "Sit down, my dear, I have something to tell you of importance. I now consider you a woman, and expect your conduct henceforward will cease to be childish. I shall therefore treat you as a woman, and desire that you will not tell any of your companions the conversation now passing between us. It is quite unnecessary to acquaint every one with our concerns: besides, your story might afford those who are maliciously in-

clined, the opportunity of being ill-natured; therefore it is for your own interest to be silent."

I assured the abbess her orders were sufficient, I should not depart from them. She then opened a drawer and produced a child's robe and cap, with a letter. "These, my dear," continued the abbess, "are all the goods I have belonging to you:—these clothes you wore on this day eleven years when sister Frances received you at the convent gate:—you were in a basket, a female stood by you: on opening the door she retired, and, by her raised eyes and supplicating countenance when she did so, seemed to implore the protection of this house for you!—But the letter is what I chiefly wish to speak to you upon. It points out the happy life you are destined to lead;—for know, my child, that you have been miraculously preserved, and before your birth had the happiness of being consecrated by your parent in a particular manner to the service of God. Read this letter: you will

then see the wish of your mother. On this day that you have been so favoured by your Maker, I would have you aware how important it is that you should preserve your soul in innocence."

I read the letter she presented me.—Never can I tell you the energy with which my heart seconded the intention of my mother. Young as I then was, I felt at that moment inspired with holy sentiments. Full of these feelings I was about to kneel by the abbess, and in her presence vow to fulfil the engagement my parent had made for me. But she stopped me, saying:

"Make no vow, my child, till you are old enough to know the nature of a solemn vow. But come to my oratory, and there at the foot of the altar ask your Heavenly Father for those graces which he can abundantly give, and which will be necessary to keep you ignorant of the foolish vanities of this world, and thus fit you for the high station you are intended to fill: whilst I will pray that you may have resolution to

withstand the temptations of this perishable life."

We spent a short time in prayer. The abbess then said, "Now, my child, we will henceforth pray for each other. I hope I shall live to see your virtues ornament this house; or, should your holy ardour make you think our order too mild for your self-denial, I trust you will have the resolution to follow the dictates of Heaven. At present, dear Maria, make yourself easy; I shall often see you: think only now how to render yourself worthy in the sight of God.—I will take charge of these things one year more, and then deliver them to your own keeping. God bless you! good night."

The result of this conversation soon formed my character. I became steady, and as I thought, ardently bent on the acquirement of those virtues and qualities suitable to a religious life. When any of my companions spoke with displeasure of one of the community, I instantly became the champion of the accused, and felt so ardent in

her vindication, that the young ladies began to consider me as not belonging to their society, and called me "The little nun." I was delighted with this distinction.—At that time there was a young lady in the noviciate; to her I attached myself, and spent most of the recreation hours with her: she gave me some instructions in Latin, which she was then learning; and in idea I already thought myself one of the sisterhood. A year passed in this manner, during which time I had frequent interviews with the abbess, who always encouraged me in the pursuit of good: she seemed quite satisfied with my conduct and with my studies. Whenever any stranger called, I was sent for to the parlour, and usually heard her say, when speaking of me, "I have the strongest hope she will prove an ornament to our house."

The day arrived which told my fourteenth year, and I was again summoned by the abbess. She complimented me on the manner in which I had attended to my du-

ties: and to show her good opinion of me, she intrusted me with the secret of the day when the lady in her noviciate was to make her vows. I then felt all my importance; —to be intrusted with the abbess's secret was the highest honour I could have aspired to. To convince me still further of her good opinion, she committed the robe, cap, and letter to my own keeping; after putting them into a beautiful little box, which she desired me to keep in remembrance of her. This was too much:—on my return to the school I could not help regarding all my companions with rather a look of contempt; which they soon perceiving, told me they had their secrets as well as myself. At this period the two Miss B——s arrived: they were half-sisters to Lord S——. And their mother being a Catholic, they were sent to be educated at the convent. It is customary, on a lady's first coming to school, that one of the upper class is appointed to entertain her during the first day or two; to show her the convent, and to in-

form her of the rules of the house. It happened that I was fixed upon to execute the office toward the lovely sisters:—for never had I met with such amiable girls; and the liking seemed, as it often happens, mutual. We became very intimate friends; so much so, that at the end of six weeks we had shared all each other's secrets—even the contents of the little box had been viewed by my new friends. This breach of confidence caused me the first sleepless night I had ever known:—all that conscious happiness I had hitherto felt, had fled; and I spent the hours in self-reproaches. The next morning I was not the first, as had been my custom, to show myself; for I felt ashamed of my want of resolution, and avoided looking in the face of the nun whom I was used to address with confidence.—She noticed it; and observing my pale countenance said, "I am sorry, Miss Providence, you look so unwell; shall I get you something from the dispensary?" Glad to have an excuse, I thanked her, saying, "as I

had only a bad headache I thought it would be better after breakfast." At dinner the abbess, who was herself indisposed, sent me half a chicken. This kindness distressed me, because I felt myself undeserving of it. The acuteness of my feelings increased by receiving an invitation from the abbess to take coffee with her. This was a favour I dared not refuse, and which I accepted most unwillingly. However, I was relieved on finding mother Francis and sister Anna Maria with her, which would render any particular conversation impossible. I got through the afternoon better than I had expected; and when I took my leave, the abbess kindly ordered me not to rise next morning at my usual hour.

On quitting the abbess I retired to bed, and there entered into an examination of all my actions. When I first undertook the investigation, it was with the intention of self-reproof, and of forming resolutions for my future conduct: but, strange to acknowledge, the more I thought of the monastic

life, the stronger my desire grew to see the world, of which my new friends had drawn a most delightful description.

The eldest Miss B—— had entered her fifteenth year, Miss Harriet was only one year younger: both had begun to enjoy the few pleasures they had yet experienced, and were old enough to regret them. Indeed, their coming at that age to a convent was a certain detriment to the school; as they spoke of events hitherto unknown and unthought-of by those who had been early accustomed to the regular habits of a monastery. Our recreations were now quite changed. Formerly we listened with delight to the sacred tales which sister Mary (the nun who attended in recreation hours) related to us from the lives of the holy Fathers; sometimes begging an extra half-hour, to hear the heroic sufferings of a martyred saint; then composed ourselves to sleep, with resolutions of religious fortitude, and awoke with hearts full of thankfulness that we were born at a time when

no Pagan tyrant forbade the practice of Christianity. Now poor sister Mary talked as before, but her hearers were inattentive; and showed no anxiety, but for the approach of eight o'clock, when, by the time that sister Mary could reach her own dormitory, all the first class had assembled in Miss B——'s apartment, to listen to the account of the entertainments which they themselves had only heard of, and which they repeated with an accuracy that made us impatient for the time when we should participate of them; then retired to our pillows, dissatisfied with ourselves and with every thing.

Thus we went on for six weeks. Our nocturnal meeting had not during that time been discovered, which made us more bold in the enterprise; when one night, in the middle of a ball which the young ladies' mother had described to them, and they were repeating to us, we were interrupted by the appearance of our first mistress; and

our consternation increased on hearing her ask, "Pray, young ladies, what edifying subject has brought you together at this unseasonable hour? I think, Miss B——, it was your voice that I heard speaking last;—from you, therefore, I expect information."

We all looked as foolish as it was possible for sixteen girls to look. Miss B—— replied, "I was telling the young ladies a story, madam." The other fifteen all echoed at once, "Yes, madam, she was telling us a story." Mother Frances then said, with a look of severity, "You know, young ladies, you have all committed the sin of disobedience. Your teachers have remarked, for some time past, that you are less attentive than formerly: something new, I fear, has occupied your imaginations;—bad it must be, since it has led you to such a sinful action. I consider it a matter of too much importance for me to decide upon the conduct proper to be pursued on this

occasion: to-morrow I shall consult our lady abbess, and you must prepare to answer her questions in the morning."

Every one of us knelt down, and together implored of mother Frances not to inform the superior—"that we would tell her the whole truth, and were willing to submit to any penance she should think proper to inflict, so she would not bring upon us the anger of the abbess."

"Well, young ladies," she replied, "I cannot stay longer with you to-night; but I will promise you not to inform the abbess till I have had another interview with you. It will depend upon what I then hear, whether I shall inform her or not. It will most likely rest on your present sincerity and future conduct. I must now see each of you to bed."

We all hastened to our apartments, promising every thing mother Frances wished —for convent girls dread the rebuke of their abbess as much, or more than a boy

fears the punishment of a tyrannical master. Now it was impossible that we could meet together without the presence of a mistress, to concert in what way we should act on this, to us, trying occasion. In the dormitory where I slept, it was resolved that we should affirm whatever Miss B—— should say: for, as mother Frances knew she had been the speaker, it was natural to suppose she would be the first to be questioned: and as the majority slept in our dormitory, we wrote our resolution on a slip of paper, which we were to pass to the others unobserved during prayers next morning.

In this manœuvre, however, we were foiled; for, to our utter astonishment and my dismay, I was first required to give an account of the last night's meeting. Panic-struck, I had really nothing to say but the truth—That Miss B—— had promised us an account of a ball which her mother had been at in England; and that as we all felt a wish to sit up later than our usual hour,

and knew it was improper to talk of such matters before the younger scholars, we had agreed to hear the tale that night."

Every one affirming this to have been the fact, and the whole fact, we received a suitable admonition; in which our prudence in forbearing to scandalize our young companions by our bad example was not forgotten. Another point was now to be settled:—in what manner we should atone for the misdemeanour. It was usual for the elder young ladies to attend chapel in their nightcaps when any action required punishment. This mode, however, would lead to inquiry from the community: to avoid which, we requested that some other method should be adopted. After much discussion, it was decided that not one of the delinquents should go to the parlour during eight days; that if any of their friends should come to see them, mother Frances should attend the grate, and say the young lady was in penance, and could not be seen that day. To this we all submitted with

resignation, thankful, that in all probability no person in the convent would know of our misconduct, except mother Frances, on whom we cordially heaped our affection for her great indulgence.

This event over, we endeavoured to go through our common avocations with more attention than we had latterly bestowed; and our endeavours succeeded: we became more comfortable ourselves, and enjoyed our reward in the constant smile of approbation from our first mistress. On the third day the bell announced that some one from the school was wanted at the grate. Mother Frances answered it as usual, but did not send for any of the young ladies. It was evident, then, that one of the party in disgrace had been asked for:—each longed to know, but no one dared inquire. Next morning, when the curtain before the choir grate was undrawn, a young gentleman was seen in the outer part, attended by an elderly one. The former looked earnestly about him; and those that knelt on the first

bench, that could steal a peep at him, declared that he had the finest face they had ever beheld. Every one wished to get a sight of the handsome stranger: and the Miss B——'s, who on that day were with their singing-master, were no less anxious than the rest. They longed for the next morning. And when the curtain was drawn inside, many were the eyes that sought the stranger. All were gratified: he knelt in the same spot as before. The Miss B——s could not forbear whispering each other, for which every one expected they would have been rebuked. What was the general surprise, on leaving the chapel, to hear he was their brother! They took the first opportunity of inquiring from mother Frances, whether he was not the person who had called the other day? She said it was; and that in consequence of the good conduct of the young ladies since their disgrace, they should go to him the next time he called. This was the fifth day. The sixth again presented the handsome stranger; and that morn-

ing he came to the parlour. The sisters were sent for, and shortly after I had a summons.

The moment I entered the room and saw Mr. B——, I could not help wishing I had such a brother. His manner seemed to me as prepossessing as his countenance; and I secretly hoped that I might often see him. He told mother Frances, "that he did not ask for his sisters to accompany him that day, because he was aware of the impropriety of even his sisters going to his lodgings, as every person might not know they were his sisters; but that he was soon to make his home at the Countess de la Sonnes, and then he would request the pleasure of their society."

The good nun commended his prudence, and promised that the young ladies should accompany him very often, because she was sure they would profit by the society of a brother every way so considerate: and there could not be a more proper person in the world than Madame la comtesse for young

people. "We are well acquainted with her merit," continued mother Frances; "she lodged six months in our house after the death of her lord. She did us the honour to choose this house for her retreat, and edified us all by her good example." The visit ended here.

Miss B—— told us her brother was going to Versailles; of course we ceased to look for him. The sisters were astonished that their brother should attend mass, because he was not a Catholic; they thought his curiosity led him to see who was to be seen whilst the nuns prayed, and really hoped, so good a young man might be converted. The next week again brought him at the time of prayers; and in the afternoon he came to the parlour, accompanied by the countess. As soon as it was known that she was there, the abbess with half the community hastened to the parlour, where a number of civilities and even compliments passed between them. She promised to visit her good nuns frequently: and the ab-

bess informed her that Miss Mortimer was to take the veil in about eight days. The countess offered the use of her diamonds, declaring they would receive additional value from the circumstance. The abbess requested she might be honoured by naming her to the bishop, as one to spend that day in the convent. The countess said it would give her the greatest satisfaction. And the second of the following month was the day appointed for the ceremony. This matter settled, the countess begged the Miss B——'s might go to her house the next morning, saying she would attend the convent mass in lieu of her parish church, and take the ladies back with her.—This was immediately agreed to.

During three weeks that Mr. B—— had been in Paris, he had visited the convent so often that his face was now become familiar to us all. I fancied his eye was often and particularly directed to me. His sisters said he always inquired for me, and had requested the countess to ask me to her house

The time for his stay in Paris had already expired. He had consented, however, to remain one week longer, to be present at the ceremony of Miss Mortimer's taking the veil. "And the next time the countess comes," said Miss B——, "you will be asked for."

"If I am asked for," said I, "I am sure it will be refused. You know I have never been suffered even to join in the Thursday walks. I would be a nun with pleasure, if I should only have the satisfaction of seeing what is passing beyond these walls. How happy you are," I continued, "to have a brother!—but do not name the subject again."

The next day brought the countess to the grate, the Miss B——s and I were sent for. I scarcely felt I walked to the parlour when I found myself there. My perturbation was somewhat abated by missing the object I so anxiously sought.

"Mr. B—— is gone to Versailles to take leave of his friends," said the countess; "and as the ladies can enjoy but little more

of their brother's company, suppose you allow them to come with me to-morrow morning: I expect Mr. B—— the following day, and I will return with them on the morning after. It will be an agreeable surprise to him. Now, my dear madam, I have another favour to ask:—These ladies seem particularly desirous that their young friend Miss Providence should spend a day with me. This is a good opportunity. Though we all know she is most especially dedicated to a cloistered life, I do not see why she should be precluded from knowing something of the world. On the contrary, her fancy may picture it to her as very delightful; and perhaps a total ignorance of it may occasion regrets, which I am certain she would never feel, could she be at all acquainted with the emptiness of its false vanities."

The abbess declared this was a thought which had never occurred to her: and admiring the superior wisdom of the countess, she acceded to the proposal. I could hardly

restrain the joy which this unexpected concession occasioned, so much was I elated at the prospect of my temporary emancipation. I checked myself, however, as much as possible, and prudently avoided making known my sentiments. I felt glad when we were dismissed; and on our way to the school gave each of my friends a warm but silent embrace: not daring to utter a word, lest any thing I should speak might be overheard, and so prevent this long-wished-for pleasure.

When the hour of bed-time arrived, I indulged without interruption the new train of ideas arising from this unlooked-for peep into a world from which I used to think myself for ever shut out. A thousand airy castles were built, and as soon destroyed; till nature being exhausted, I fell into a profound sleep, from which I did not awake till roused by sister Mary's call, saying, "Make haste, Miss Providence, my lady abbess wishes to speak with you directly." No unfortunate monarch compelled to abdicate

his throne ever felt more humbled than I did at that moment. I had closed my eyes with the most enchanting prospect before me which my imagination could form:—I awoke, and all those delights were snatched from me in a moment! I felt certain that this summons was to retract the leave granted me the day before. I hastened, however, to obey it;—a few tears involuntarily fell as I dressed myself: these I tried to subdue, by calling all my fortitude to my assistance: then saying a prayer, I hurried away, and presented myself before the abbess, with all the bitter yet resigned feelings of a youthful disappointment.

She accosted me in these words: "I am glad, my child, to see that tranquillity on your countenance which shows the placidity of your mind:—thank God! you are not ruffled by vain expectation. You are right, my child, the world has no charms for the pious soul. I sent for you to administer some good advice—some caution; but I trust my alarms were groundless. However,

there is always danger when we put ourselves in the way of temptation; therefore it will be well to be on your guard. I will give you this little cross:—Let it be your monitor; I have often found it such to me. Wear it round your neck, under your uniform*; for worldlings are apt to laugh at holy things: and should you find yourself under temptation, think of this cross:—at the beginning of it press it to you, reciting the 'Our Father;' and I trust, my child, you

* This was the name given to the dress which was worn by *all* the young ladies in the school of the convent of Austin nuns. This method appears to have so many advantages, that it is to be wished that the plan of wearing an uniform was adopted in all public seminaries. Every person must have observed an aptness in the youthful mind to attach a sort of personal value to expensive and showy articles of dress. When no variety in dress can be made, the frivolous anxiety, which if encouraged proves hurtful, is effectually checked; by which means the attention of the scholar is more steady to useful pursuits, and the young people feel happier in each other's society, when freed from those distinctions which are oftener the result of outward appearance than of real merit.

will never fall seriously. But I will say no more; I see your spirits are depressed: you shall breakfast with me. Take courage, Maria, we must often act against inclination; two days will soon pass away, and then I shall receive my innocent Maria, purified even by this short trial."

I was really affected at the manner of the abbess; and as she hung the sacred cross about my neck, I mentally vowed to think of her admonition. Breakfast over, she hurried me away: and I quitted the apartment with self-dissatisfaction, at thinking that I had created in her mind an opinion of me superior to what I really deserved. I had only time to dress myself, when the bell rang for prayers. When finished, we got into the coach, and in half an hour were set down at the Hotel de ——.

The variety of dresses, the carriages, the shops, and magnificent buildings attracted my attention so entirely, that I did not hear one word that passed between my companions. I should have been contented to

have spent the day in driving through the streets without taking refreshment, so delighted was I with the novelty of the scene. I was astonished to behold such throngs of people; for, from the very few that I had chanced to see, I had concluded, without thinking on the subject, that there really were very few persons in the world.

Arrived at the countess's mansion, I was struck with the splendour that reigned throughout, and puzzled to know the use of many articles. At two o'clock we sat down to what I thought was a sumptuous dinner, though our hostess gave me to understand we dined as she would have done when alone. In the middle of our repast Mr. B—— was announced, to the great astonishment of every one. He accounted for his entrance by saying he had met a chevalier, who informed him that the gentleman he intended to visit was gone with His Majesty to Fontainbleau. I felt at first embarrassed in his presence; but this soon wore away:—his good-humour, vivacity and

ease, soon put my awkwardness to flight, and I felt quite *à mon aise*. After taking coffee, Mr. B—— told the countess, that since he was returned upon her hands, she must find him employment; and asked "if she did not mean to show his sisters something of Paris?" proposed visiting some of the churches, and finishing by a walk in the Palais Royal. His sisters caught this offer with avidity; nor did they rest till they had obtained an order for the carriage.

The first place we went to was the church of St. Geneviève.—I should have been satisfied to have devoted the evening to looking at the paintings of the noble dome. However, the young ladies hurried me on, saying, "This is nothing to the Palais Royal!" to which the carriage immediately drove. At the entrance of the south walk we alighted; and in a few minutes I thought myself on fairy land:—the elegance of the shops, the trees illuminated with coloured lamps, the numerous devices, the variety of company, the melody of the music,—all was so

new, so delightful, that in an ecstasy of joy I exclaimed, " I could stay in this paradise for ever! I never supposed there was such a spot upon earth!"

" You would make all places a paradise to me," said a voice, which I found to be that of Mr. B——. We were then passing a jeweller's shop;—the countess wanted her watch regulated. During that moment I took up a toy: it was a golden heart, and had this device—*Je ne change qu'en mourant.* " Do you admire it?" said Mr. B. " Yes," I replied, " very much:—But what is the use of it?" " I will explain that to you another time," replied he; and asking the man the price of it, which he immediately paid, put it into his pocket. I had no idea but that he bought it for himself, and thought no more about it.

When it was ten o'clock the countess asked " if I was not fatigued?" " I should never be tired of this place!" I replied.

" If I thought you in earnest," said the countess, " I should regret having brought

you—Sure, this will not drive out the vocation!"

"I will think of that when I return to the convent," I answered: "at present, I can only think of the enchanting scene around me." She called to the footman to order the carriage; and I quitted the spot with a regret I could not immediately overcome.

On our return I was very much astonished to find several ladies and gentlemen in the drawing-room, and tables set for cards. I thought the countess lived almost as recluse as a nun; now I saw my mistake. And when I retired with my young friends for the night, they informed me that she usually filled up her evenings with cards, at her own or other persons' houses. They called it an innocent diversion; but I own it did not accord with the habits and conduct I had seen the countess pursue, and lessened the high opinion I had formed of her religious principles.—Before I withdrew to my own apartment, I asked, at what hour I should appear in the morning? and was in-

formed that eleven o'clock was the breakfast hour; but that we should be expected to accompany our hostess to church at ten.

"And what must we do with ourselves till ten?" I asked. "Indeed," replied Miss B——, "my sister and I shall be glad to sleep: but, if you cannot lie so long, take this key; it unlocks the pavilion on the terrace;—there you will find amusement enough." I took the key, and wished them a good night. I found it difficult to preserve my attention whilst I said some short prayers, the occurrences of the day so distracted my thoughts. I intended when in bed to review the past day, and to question my own conduct; but such a weariness oppressed me, from the unusual lateness of the hour, that my eyes closed before I began the scrutiny. Notwithstanding the fatigue I had undergone, I awoke just before the house clock struck six. The morning looked beautiful and inviting: my window faced the pavilion. The lightness of its structure, so different from all the buildings I

had hitherto seen, excited my curiosity; and I was in such haste to examine the interior, that in my hurry I forgot the present of my good abbess. Whilst unbarring the garden door, the cross occurred to my memory. "I will put it on before I go to chapel," I mentally exclaimed: "there can be no temptation in the garden." And I felt satisfied. On opening the pavilion, I thought myself a second time on fairy ground. The singing of the birds in gilt cages suspended over my head; the perfume from the exotics which bloomed in all variety of colours; the splendour and taste of the decorations; the variety of valuable curiosities, —completely bewildered me. It ended not here: I was yet to be amazed even to terror; for, on passing the huge trunk of a tree which rose in the centre, it sprang open, and presented numerous shelves of well-bound books, with a writing apparatus on a marble slab—I really think I should have fainted at this moment, had not Mr. B—— opportunely presented himself to my view.

"For goodness' sake, sir," I exclaimed, "what have I done? I am quite alarmed."

"I am happy," said he, "I came at this juncture. You accidentally pressed your foot upon a spring which is placed purposely to open this bookcase, and occasion surprise. This is not a tree; yet it is so good a representation of one that it deceives every one—But we will talk of this presently. I came to request your permission to speak on a subject to me far more interesting. Allow me to tell you how fully you have employed my thoughts from the moment I first saw you through the convent grate. And when my sisters informed me of the circumstances that destined you to a religious life, I determined not to quit Paris till, by some way or other, I could obtain an interview. It was not my sisters who detained me in this city; it was not accident which brought me back yesterday—all was by design: and now that chance has seconded my wishes, I request you will give me your attention whilst I warn you of the

dangers preparing for you: and I beg of you to regard the admonition as that of an affectionate brother, anxious to prevent the misery of a beloved sister." Then touching a spring on the opposite side, the tree closed; and presenting me a seat, I sat down by him, determined to listen to his words, though hardly conscious whether all I had seen and heard was not a dream.

"I will urge nothing," said Mr. B——, "in excuse for thus addressing a stranger. You are so situated that your own companions are silent from ignorance; and as to the world, you are out of its reach. I wish to point out to you the absurdity of any young person blindly giving up her life to the guidance of others. You have been persuaded, I understand, in consequence of a letter, that you are consecrated by your parents to a religious life. Think for a moment,—is it reasonable that a being endowed by its Maker with free will, should slavishly submit to the absolute authority of another, and thus deprive itself of the

very power with which God so highly adorned it?—will he be pleased with a forced submission? Your countenance tells me you have an intelligent mind; exercise it, therefore, by asserting your right to think for yourself. You are now in your fifteenth year. I will never rise, dear lady! from this posture" (and he knelt at my feet) "till I have obtained your promise not to make any disposal of yourself until I see you again. My tour will occupy me two years: in that period embrace all the opportunities which may offer for the improvement of yourself; and should you really be disposed to spend your life in a cloister, make no engagement to do so, until my return. You cannot be pressed to any thing more than a promise, because your age will not permit your making your vows for some years; but the nuns might induce you to enter early into the noviciate, and thus entangle you beyond the power of receding.—Do you feel any difficulty in giving me your solemn promise? I can have no interest but your own

at heart. I wish you to avoid regrets which, should they assail you hereafter, would poison your happiness, and make you guilty of the heinous sacrilege of breaking a vow, the inviolability of which you called Heaven to attest."

I shuddered at the mere apprehension of such a crime; and falling on my knees, "I promise you," said I, "never to enter into any engagement before your return."

"As a pledge that you will observe your words, give me," said he, "a lock of your hair; and receive from my sister the heart you admired last night. I know your delicacy will be better pleased to take it from her than from me: but wear it for my sake." Then rising, he presented me his hand to quit the pavilion. I felt embarrassed, and I suppose I looked so; for he said, "Surely you are not displeased that you have so far given your word, whilst at all events you will gain time for reflection?"

"It is not that," I replied: "but I was thinking that, for aught I know, I am de-

pendent on the bounty of the convent, and it would be ungrateful in me to act contrary to the wish of my benefactors."

"Cannot you consider me as your brother?" said he, hurrying me towards the house. "My fortune is ample: it will be larger; and I shall feel happy in sharing with you as a sister the superabundance. Leave that to my management:—neither you nor they will know whence it comes."

I had only time to look my thanks, when I entered the saloon, and saw my friends were waiting for me.

"I found this fair recluse entranced in your pavilion," said Mr. B——: "so I thought it but right to release her, and bring her here."

"Thank you," said the countess. "Will you be one of us this morning?"

"No," he replied: "I must write, in your absence; for after breakfast I have promised the Chevalier du Bois to accompany him *au petit Trianon*. Your Ladyship has society now, and can spare me: I fear it will not be in my power to return to-night."

Whilst the female part are gone to chapel, the author takes the opportunity of giving her readers some account of Miss Providence and Mr. B——.

Of the former I shall say nothing, further than that she remained perfectly ignorant of her parents. She was now little more than fourteen: her face was not handsome, yet it received from the expression of the countenance an interest that could not fail to call forth general admiration; it conveyed the most favourable impression as to the disposition of its owner: to this was joined a figure most winningly graceful, and inclined to be tall. She possessed a good natural understanding, which only required cultivation. To mildness and gentleness of temper she added energy and resolution when occasion demanded, and was so devoid of affectation that every action corresponded with her feelings. Although reared within the walls of a convent from her infancy, Miss Providence had been taught to view bigotry and superstition in their true and proper colours. No

wonder then that Mr. B——, who was a great admirer of female beauty, should feel interested for such a being. At the first sight of her, he, like every one else, thought he could never tire of beholding her. As soon as he learned from his sisters the peculiar circumstances of her fate, he resolved to save this, as he thought destined victim. When he had conversed with her, her ingenuousness and unaffected manners won his heart; and he said to himself, "She has an excellent understanding:—if I can but secure her for my wife, how fortunate will be my lot! Her innocent mind is untainted by even the knowledge of vice: her principles will secure my honour;—she will become all I wish: and when hereafter I shall present her at our British court, how will every female shrink by the side of such fair excellence!"

Thus reasoned the only son and heir of Lord S——. Hitherto he had considered females merely as the means of amusing a vacant hour; he never connected them with

a serious thought; concluding them all equally trifling, and incapable of being made solidly useful. He had now met with one whom he was inclined to value for her virtues, and his whole mind was bent on securing her affections. To talk of love, he knew would alarm that modesty on which his admiration was founded; therefore, though his heart now felt the force of that passion, which before had only dwelt upon his tongue, he did that violence to his feelings as not to permit one word or look to escape him that was likely to endanger the loss of his object. We often find that man, to obtain some wished for end, will practise a course of self-denial equal to the torments of a martyr.—He obtained her promise "not to dispose of herself without his knowledge." With this he was resolved to be satisfied; and, from fear of betraying more than would be prudent for him to show, he had the resolution to avoid her.

After breakfast Mr. B—— pursued his plan of going to Trianon; and the countess

ordered the carriage, and took us to the Hotel Dieu. Our attention was arrested by the picture of Mary Magdalen, whose countenance expressed so strongly the emotions of her soul, whilst the tear that seemed starting from her eye displayed in full force the agonized feelings of repentance. The good nuns, whose heroic zeal and unfeigned piety led them to attend the sick-couch of their suffering brethren and minister to their wants, demanded my utmost veneration. I wished, at the moment, to have been ten years older, that I might have added to their number.

From this place we proceeded to the Palais de Bourbon. Here a different scene reconciled my mind once more to the grandeur of the world.—In the evening I felt a wish to pay a second visit to the Palais Royal; but no one mentioning it, and the countess seeming inclined to remain at home, I was silent. At supper we were joined by our beau, who appeared particularly cheerful, and spoke of commencing his journey

the ensuing week. The following morning I had a strong inclination to go to the pavilion: but fearing that my doing so might be construed into an intention of meeting Mr. B——, I took the opposite road, which conducted me into a small wood. I had reached the interior, and was admiring the statue of Minerva, when Mr. B—— encountered me from the opposite direction.

"I think myself fortunate," said he, "in meeting my amiable wanderer. I have had one disappointment at the pavilion, as I expected to have found you there."

"Indeed, I was much inclined," I answered, "to have visited that sweet spot again."

"And what prevented you?"

"Really, sir, to say the truth, it struck me that it was your morning walk, and that you might put a wrong construction on finding me there again."

"How I admire that candour!" replied he: "I hope you will always treat me thus. Now I must be candid in my turn, and own that I have been purposely seeking you, in

the hope of hearing from you a confirmation of the promise you gave me yesterday."

"My intention is the same:—not to dispose of myself without your knowledge."

"I am, and ought to be, satisfied," said he. "And now, do not think me an encroacher, if, when I write to my sisters, you allow me to address a few lines to you."

"The nuns, sir, read all the letters. Indeed for my part I never received one; and perhaps they would not think it proper, in my situation, that I should hear from a gentleman."

"Right," said Mr. B——: "and be assured you shall not have any letter from me to create displeasure. But you will add much to my happiness if you would sometimes favour me with a line:—you know a brother has a right to inquire how his sister goes on; and I pledge my word that no brother ever loved a sister more sincerely than I am inclined to love you. My sisters will give their letters to the countess, who

will forward them to me; and the community will be ignorant of their contents. If, Miss Providence, you knew the comfort it would give me to hear of your health and welfare, I am sure your charitable disposition would not refuse this favour."

"I shall find great pleasure in complying with your request," I answered; "and feel much obliged by your kind wishes."

"Then, farewell," said Mr. B—. "Whether I have the pleasure of seeing you again or not before I leave Paris, remember, that you will find in me a steady friend—recollect, I have left my heart with you; and remember, no premature vow—no engagement—till we meet again!"

"No engagement," repeated I, "till we meet again—Adieu!" He mounted his horse, which a servant was holding, and I returned to the house.

On entering the breakfast-room I felt relieved that no person was there. I found a void I could not account for; and pressing my hand on my breast I recollected the sacred

cross, which I had forgotten from the night of my arrival. I hastened to my chamber, and there reproached myself for having so long neglected my monitor.

We returned that day to the convent; and I own I felt myself an altered person. I could not banish the desire I often experienced to view again those places I had seen with the countess. The figure of Mr. B—— intruded on my mind too often for my peace. Sometimes I checked my wandering thoughts; at others I was led to consider how much we are influenced by appearances. I reflected that the countess was a strict observer of discipline when in the convent; and when in the world she seemed equally alive to its pleasures. "We are then the creatures of time and circumstances," thought I: and I was satisfied. During six months we all went on in the usual way; nothing material occured; till a letter came to the abbess, which I shall inclose; and for this time will finish this tedious scrawl:—hoping, dear madam, you will par-

don my having been so minute. I wished you to understand the manner in which I first became acquainted with Mr. B——. I will resume my pen in a few days; and beg, dear madam, you will allow me to assure you how sincerely I feel myself your obliged and grateful friend,

MARIA.

Mrs. Fisher got thus far the first night. On the second she opened the parcel, No. 3, which she also found to contain a letter to Mrs. Stewart in the following words:

Douglas.

"Dear Madam,

"You were pleased to express an interest in my story: I will not therefore tease you with unnecessary excuses, but proceed to say: That on the 12th of October I received a summons from the abbess. The moment I approached her, I perceived she had a letter in her hand. 'I have sent for

you, my poor child,' said the good nun, 'to show you this letter; which conveys so different a meaning from the one your mother left with you, that I am at a loss how to act, or to guess from whom it comes—I wish your opinion on the subject.' As she afterwards gave it me to place in my little box of treasures, I inclose it for your perusal.

"*To the Lady Abbess of the Convent of A—— Nuns, Paris.*

"No. 8, Holborn-court, London, Oct. 3.

"Madam,

"I have orders to inclose the sum of one hundred pounds, for the use of the young lady who was sent, when a child of two years old, to your house in the year 1778; and to assure you that untoward circumstances have delayed the promised remittance, which shall be more punctually paid in future. I am also desired to say, that a relative of the young lady begs she will

pay every attention to the instructions she has now the opportunity of receiving.—Please to acknowledge the receipt of this, in a line directed to Mr. A——, No. 8, Holborn-court, London.

"I have the honour to remain your most obedient servant (For my employer)

"An Agent."

My surprise was equal to that of the abbess. But this feeling was lost in the satisfaction of finding myself thought of by a relative:—it gave rise to the hope that I should at a future period be claimed by my family. My joy kept me silent; when the good abbess remarked, "Here is no mention of the life you are intended to lead; that line which names the attention expected from you, half implies the cultivation of general talents; or perhaps religious instruction is the only point alluded to. In short, my child, we must pray for the grace of God to direct us rightly.—How do you feel inclined yourself?"

"Indeed, dear mother," I replied, "I am anxious to know my parents before I make any engagement whatever."

"We will pray for that event, my child," said the nun; and then dismissed me.

As soon as I had an opportunity I showed the letter to my two friends. They immediately agreed that many of the words were written in a hand that much resembled their brother's. But when we considered that this was dated London, and that the Miss B——s had a letter from him last week from Florence, we thought it impossible it should have come from him; and we were satisfied that it was from a relation, perhaps from my father's agent.—This event made a great change in my pursuits: I applied myself to music, and to every branch of education within my power; and by the time I was fifteen had abandoned all thoughts of a religious life. My dress, indeed, continued to be entirely white; but in every thing else I began to partake of the same indulgences as my companions,

and had twice obtained permission to accompany them in their Thursday's walk.

In the month of February I was again sent for by the abbess, occasioned by another letter in the same hand-writing; which I also inclose.

"*To the Lady Abbess of the Convent of A—— Nuns, Paris.*

"No. 8, Holborn-court, London, Feb. 3.

"Madam,

"I am ordered to inclose the sum of fifty pounds, for the use of the young lady sent to your house in 1778.—Please to acknowledge the receipt as before; and at the same time have the goodness to say what improvement the young lady has made. I have the honour to remain, madam, your most obedient servant (For my employer)

"An Agent."

Here we were again puzzled. The abbess first broke silence, saying, "It is evident to me, my child, that, however

strong your mother's intention was, at the time she brought you here, of consecrating you to God by a religious life, her resolution is now changed.... another instance of the instability of human nature. And it has appeared to me, as well as to all our worthy community, that your vocation to that life is not so ardent as when you were younger.—How is it? speak, my child!"

"Really, reverend mother, I have wished and tried all in my power to like the life of a nun; but it seems that the more I try, the stronger inclination I feel to see something first of the world."

"I pity you, my poor child. What you describe is a temptation of Satan to draw you into his power. I will pray for you, and you must be always watchful. I hope this is only a trial of your piety:—be steady in performing all your religious duties, and trust the rest to God. If we are to lose you, and you are to become a member of the world, I trust you will remain steadfast in all your habits:—Almighty God can keep

you as innocent in the world as in a cloister: but I tremble, my child, for the difficult trials you must undergo to prove yourself worthy of Him. Nothing, however, is impossible, and we will trust to Him.—I was going to ask you, my dear, whether in my answer you would wish me to put any questions to this Mr. A—— respecting his master?"

"O that he would inform you of my parents! If they are living, I feel it is my duty to seek them, to love them, to follow the plan they shall lay down for me. Yes, madam,—of all things I long to know them. But were I assured they were dead, I would never more think of quitting this house."

"I will request our agent to go himself to No. 8, Holborn-court; and you shall hear the result," continued the abbess. "I shall have an opportunity of sending to-morrow, and I will go this minute and write my letter."

In a few days the countess came to the convent, and asked that my two friends

and myself might spend the day with her—"that she would bring us back on the morrow."—Her requests were always granted; and in half an hour we were seated in her coach. On reaching her hotel she recollected that she had to call on a friend, where she did not choose to take us:—so jocosely saying, "Children, you must amuse each other," she returned to her carriage, and we proceeded to her boudoir. Upon her work-table was placed a parcel, directed "Miss B——." Here appeared indeed wherewith to amuse us; and supposing this to have been purposely placed there by the countess, we all assisted in opening it. We had taken off three covers, and were debating what the countess could have wrapped up in such a manner, when the next discovered an elegant work-box. Within that was a beautifully enamelled bonbonnière, and three letters—one for each of the sisters, the third for me—which I hastily opened, and here inclose for your perusal.

I have the honour to remain, madam, your obliged and grateful friend,

MARIA.

"*To Miss Providence, at the Convent of A—— Nuns, Paris.*

"Rome.

"I hope, my dear young lady, you will receive this safe through the hands of my sisters; and that you will pardon the presumption of a stranger in thus daring to address you:—But to me you are no stranger, your figure being always present to my mind since I had first the happiness of seeing you. I really could not miss this opportunity of recalling my existence to your recollection. I have reviewed numberless fine sights of late, which I shall endeavour to relate with all the veracity of an historian;—but I have seen nothing to please me half so well as an object I met in the pavilion. I had this morning the honour of paying my respects to His Holiness. I

assure you he is a fine reverend-looking man; his appearance commands respect, whilst his affable demeanour courts affection. I was highly satisfied with my interview. I dare say you long to hear if I kissed his toe. Be satisfied, I did not—that absurdity is left off, with many others, in this enlightened age. His Holiness now presents his hand, which I think is much more princely. Next month we purpose directing our course through the Pyrenean mountains, and I please myself with the thought of seeing St. Bernard's monastery; and I hope in the ensuing spring to return to my own home, which I shall enjoy the more from this absence. By that time I suppose my sisters will also be thinking of England, and I trust you will have heard of your friends. Who knows but we may all meet there? Wherever you are, my dear young lady! you will always carry with you the kind wishes of your acquaintance, among which number I beg you will allow me a place. I

have the honour to subscribe myself your very humble servant,

"C. B."

From Miss Providence to Mrs. Stewart (in continuation).

Dear Madam,

Douglas.

It is with pleasure I again resume my pen to obey your commands.

The above letter administered a comfort I had never before experienced. To be noticed by one so handsome, so accomplished, and so noble-minded, was to me a high gratification. Hitherto no one had professed any regard for me, except the kind nuns. I had felt the want of home and of friends. Each of my companions described the domestic pleasures in such animated language, that I listened to them, hoping yet doubting whether I should ever experience those comforts. Sometimes I began to hope that a short time would bring me acquainted with my family.

One thing struck me particularly: that the letter I had received, and those written to the abbess, seemed to be in the same writing;—yet one came from Rome, the other from London. This was a mystery I could not solve. Should it prove that these letters were really from Mr. B——, how could I account for the generous interest he took in my concerns!—My gratitude increased daily; for every day I examined the writing and was convinced it was to him I owed these supplies. At length I fixed on a reason that perfectly satisfied me. I concluded that Mr. B—— was acquainted with my parents,—was perhaps commissioned by them to make these remittances; and so sure was I of this being the case, that I resolved to write to him, to ask him their name and place of abode. The sisters thought as I did, for they had been struck with the similarity of the writing: and it was agreed that the next time the sisters should write, I should inclose a letter in

theirs. An opportunity soon offered. The following is a copy of my letter.

"*To the Honourable Mr. B——, Rome.*

"Paris.

"Sir,

"I beg you will accept my thanks for the favour of your letter in January last. I should have taken the opportunity of answering it sooner, but you know how little we convent girls see, and I was waiting for something new to form the subject of a letter. I have followed your advice in not entering into any engagement:—indeed the nuns never press me on that head, but leave me perfectly free to do in every thing the same as my companions. I hope, sir, you will excuse what I am going to ask:—Your sisters as well as myself have reason to think that you are acquainted with my family, and know of the sums lately sent, on my account, to the abbess. I entreat of you, sir, to inform me whether my father and mo-

ther are living? If they are, may I not be permitted to address them? Or tell me the time when I shall be allowed to embrace them. If, good sir, you knew the anxiety I feel on this subject, you would not keep me in suspense: I assure you that I will conform to all they wish. If I could but obtain their blessing, their sanction, I am ready either to remain in this convent all my life, or to devote my days to testify my gratitude and affection in my attention towards them. Pardon this trouble; but do favour me with what information you can, which will ensure for ever the gratitude of your obliged humble servant,

"MARIA PROVIDENCE."

It was not till after another remittance, dated August 3, in the same writing as those sent before, that I received the following letter from Mr. B.

" *To Miss Providence, at the Convent of A—— Nuns, Paris.*

" Florence.

" I had the pleasure of receiving your letter safe, my dear young lady! and sorry am I to say, that I am not possessed of the intelligence you suppose. I am entirely ignorant of your parents—of their existence, their name, or family. It may be imprudent in me to hazard an opinion; yet I am tempted to say, that it appears to me most probable that they are not living; or, supposing that they are, that they do not wish to be known to you. I am grieved to communicate such an idea; I may act wrong in doing it: but my sincerity urges me not to create a hope which it is not, nor ever may be, in my power to realize. Be assured of this, that on my return to England I will make every inquiry that opportunity may offer to ascertain the fact; but it is very difficult to set about such an inquiry without some clue to direct the search.—I am acquainted with the person who has

made the late remittances to your abbess: but I am not at liberty to tell you more, than that the motive for that money being sent, arose from the person having felt great pleasure by accidentally seeing you at your convent, and from the light in which your conduct there was represented to him. He has an ample fortune; and I can answer for him, that whether you remain with your worthy nuns, or that you enter into the world, his friendship will never forsake you. But of this we shall soon have the opportunity of conversing more freely, as the present hostile appearance of things will occasion me to winter in London.—I have many letters to write by this packet. With the hope of seeing you well on my road to England, and with best respects to your good and worthy community, I have the honour to subscribe myself, your very humble and obedient servant,

"C. B."

Miss Providence (in continuation) To Mrs. Stewart.

With the last letter came others to my two friends, and one to madame la comtesse; all purporting that Mr. B—— had orders from his father to look out a chaperone with whom his sisters could be sent to England; which, he said, he supposed would be easy, since the English families were all hastening to quit France.

I will not trouble you, dear madam, with the secret regret I entertained at not having the most distant prospect of accompanying any of my companions—many being actually preparing for, and all talking of a removal. The greater certainty I felt of remaining in the convent, the more anxious I became to quit it. But my wishes were confined to my own bosom and the confidence of the sisters. On the first of October Mr. B—— came to Paris, and a few hours after presented himself at the parlour grate of the convent, where the abbess and his sisters had an interview with

him. He inquired after me, and left his respects; but had not time, they told me, to send for me; as he wished to make immediate inquiries among his English friends to find out a proper escort for his sisters. This seemed a very natural excuse; and I began to think more of his sisters than of Mr. B——, from the apprehension that I should never perhaps see or hear of them more. They promised to write: but we all feared that the war would prevent our correspondence, or at best render it very uncertain.

The next morning Mr. B—— again visited the convent, accompanied by the charming Mrs. P——, who was to leave Paris in two days, with her daughter and a female servant; and who said she should have great pleasure in taking charge of the young ladies, and would leave them under the protection of their own family, as she also resided in Cavendish-square, and their society would be pleasant to her daughter and herself. This was thought too good

an offer to require deliberation; and it was resolved that the Miss B——s should dine with her, that they might have the opportunity of making acquaintance with her daughter:—and as they seemed to regret leaving me, I also was invited, and received permission to accompany them. After dinner Mrs. P—— ordered her carriage to make some calls upon her friends, telling us she would take us back to the convent at her return. We amused ourselves in the garden during Mrs. P——'s absence; where we had not been long when Miss P——, recollecting some orders she wished to give, went to speak to her servant. The Miss B——s accompanied her, and I was left alone with their brother.

"This is an opportunity I have been wishing for all day," said Mr. B——: "time will not allow of ceremony. Permit me to ask—Have you any wish, any message, I can convey to the person who has lately sent your remittances? Have you well reflected upon the life you would prefer? Is

it that of a convent; or, what is more natural, and in my opinion more pleasing to God, that of a useful member of society?"

I replied, "Sometimes, sir, I think one, sometimes the other: I am fearful of fixing upon any thing, lest I should err. Were it possible for me to see my benefactor, I would do whatever he should be pleased to point out—I feel that I have no other friend! So sincere is my gratitude, that I beg you to tell him, that if he will but allow me to see and to thank him, he shall dispose of my life as he pleases."

"Will you give me your hand, in assurance that you will keep this agreement?"

"I promise you I will."

"My dear young lady, suppose a decrepit ugly man were to require that you should sacrifice your young and charming figure to become his wife?"

"I should feel he had acted towards *me* as a father, and merited my obedience and affection—I should respect him. I

should force myself to love him—God would assist me."

Mr. B—— at this moment was seized with such a faintness, (in consequence, he said, of the exertion of his journey,) that I hastened to procure him assistance; and saw no more of him for that day. The following one he came to fetch his sisters. My sorrow at parting from them made me almost forget he had been ill: but I observed he looked better, and was glad to hear him say, "he would call to tell me how my friends found themselves on quitting Paris."

When they were gone, the abbess, knowing how much attached we had been to each other, asked me to spend that day with the nuns. But they who had been hitherto always cheerful, were now evidently depressed;—every day lessened the number of their scholars, and every hour brought intelligence of some new misery having befallen one or other of their acquaintance.

The next morning I was summoned at an earlier hour than usual to attend the abbess. "My child," said she, "the ways of God are unsearchable! A circumstance has happened, which has surprised *me* as much as it will do *you*. Our friend Mr. B——, who is an excellent young man, has just shown me a letter from a gentleman whose name I am not at liberty to mention; but it is in the same hand-writing as those letters which have lately contained your money. Your benefactor, alarmed at the present state of affairs, (which is truly awful to all good Christians,) has demanded you of me: I have no right to detain you. Our good father confessor, as well as myself, is satisfied that the writing is the same: and the kind Mrs. P—— is willing, on this emergency, to take you with her. I therefore think it right you should go. Your things will be soon packed up: I have ordered them to be got ready within an hour, at which time we expect Mr. B—— will call for you.—Take comfort, my child,

I grieve to part with you. At any other time I would have written to the gentleman, and have kept you here till I should have had his answer;—but the times are such, we know not the danger of delay. Alas, my child! we are ignorant how long we may ourselves remain in this happy asylum;—but we must submit. Should God, who can always draw good out of evil, think fit to bless his servants by converting the wicked and bringing them into the true path of religion, we may hope to see you again;—perhaps you are yet designed to be one of our community:—Pray for us, my child, as we will for you. Bear in mind, that you have that sacred cross;—always wear it, as a preservative from sin. God bless you! and should you have any opportunity, let us hear from you.—The bell rings; it is for you. Adieu, my child, and thank Providence you have so good an opportunity as this of returning to England. Thank Mrs. P—— for her goodness in taking you."

I had reached the door when Mr. B—— in apparent haste handed me into the carriage; and I soon lost sight of that inclosure where I had spent such happy days, and where I should now be glad to spend the remainder of my life!—I was careless of the objects I passed: my tears flowed plentifully; and on taking the handkerchief from my face, I saw that the carriage had stopped before a very large mansion. It was not Mrs. P——'s; neither could it be madame la comtesse de la Sonne's; for she had gone to Rouen for security:—and I was at a loss to guess where I was. Of that I will acquaint you tomorrow, and shall now subscribe myself your grateful and obliged

MARIA.

Mrs. Fisher here closed her lecture for that night. Her heart palpitated to know the event, yet dreaded to learn the consequence of her daughter trusting herself to so young a protector. She was tempted to blame the nuns for suffering Maria to leave

in such a hasty manner: but when she recollected that the good abbess had been bred in a cloister from eight years old, she checked the rashness of her thoughts, saying to herself, "It is from my intercourse with mankind that I have become suspicious; I have experienced the deceitfulness of the world; but the good abbess had not;—innocent, sincerely virtuous from inclination and from habit, her mind gave the colouring of goodness to all; taking it for granted that every one is such as he appears. Happy delusion! And with regard to Maria—who could expect prudence and caution at fifteen? Reared in seclusion as she had been, not only her life but her thoughts were unspotted. Some young ladies will readily conclude she ought to have supposed Mr. B—— to be in love with her. To such it is answered for Maria, that she was not accustomed to hear the subject spoken of. Mr. B—— was the only gentleman she had known:—she admired him because he appeared pious, amiable, and good;—

she supposed that the interest he showed for her arose from the love his sisters had for her, and from their favourable report: but as to any real admiration excited by her beauty, no such thoughts had ever entered her head. Had Maria felt sensible of the extreme loveliness of her person, she would have considered it too transient a subject for admiration:—her principles were founded on a more solid basis, her admiration on what was more durable—the virtues and beauties of the mind.—But I will no longer delay the curiosity I hope my readers feel for the fate of her whose narrative I will now resume.

Mrs. Fisher's impatience for the next evening nearly incapacitated her for her usual employments: but resolution will effect much; and she acquitted herself tolerably well through the day; and when the time of retiring left her wholly mistress of her actions, she unfolded the packet No. 4, which also began with a letter from Miss Providence to Mrs. Stewart.

" Dear Madam,

" It was twelve o'clock when I quitted the convent, and I suppose it might be half past twelve when I found myself seated in an elegant saloon; and was going to ask for the ladies, when a reverend abbé entered, who Mr. B—— informed me was the gentleman that had accompanied him on his tour, and who meant to return with him to England. 'This gentleman's name is Houlier,' continued Mr. B——; 'he was at first intended for my tutor, to which his merits have added the title of my best friend, for such I shall ever esteem him.' Mr. Houlier answered this eulogium by speaking of the great kindness Mr. B—— was going to confer by taking him to England; 'all the non-juring priests,' he said, 'being at that time proscribed. Indeed,' continued the abbé, 'my life here is only secure through this gentleman's protection; were I discovered, it would fall a sacrifice to my religion: and though I think and hope I have strength to become a martyr

for the sake of my divine Master, the flesh is weak; and it is better not to tempt the frailty of human nature as long as we can avoid it.' My eyes incessantly watched the door, and I expressed my astonishment at not seeing the ladies. Mr. B—— then informed me that they had set out that morning; but that in the evening he and the abbé would accompany me, and hoped to overtake them so as to embark with them at Calais. 'We will travel all night, on account of that gentleman,' said Mr. B——, (the abbé was then leaving the room,) 'as he will be less likely to be recognised than in the day-time.'

"'I think, sir,' I replied, 'it will be best for me to return to the good nuns.'

"'You remember the promise you gave yesterday—That your benefactor should dispose of your future life?'

"'I do: but now that Mrs. P—— and your sisters are gone, I think the abbess would conceive it right I should remain with *her*, till some other lady would be

kind enough to take charge of me;—at least we ought to consult her.'

"'My dear Miss Providence, circumstances alter the usual course of things. There is no time to adopt that measure now; we are almost the last English family in Paris: besides, your remaining with the nuns would inconvenience *them*, and endanger *you*. They are uncertain whether they may not be turned out of their peaceful abode to-morrow; and then how would the person so interested for your welfare know where to find you?'

"'In case they went, they might leave me with some one of their friends here, till I could acquaint my benefactor and receive his orders.'

"'It would be dangerous to hazard a letter, my dear young lady. Listen to me —Your present critical situation induces me to unfold an event which otherwise I should not have done, except in the presence of my family. Can you pardon me, when I tell you I wrote those letters, and

inclosed the money to the convent; and purposely sent them to my agent in London, to be by *him* put into the office there?'

" ' Are you then ignorant of my parents?'

" ' Entirely ignorant—Without the least knowledge whether they are living or dead. For your sake I hope the former; but were I to listen to my own judgement, I should suppose the latter.'

" ' And you have been thus generous without the prospect of a return?'

" ' No, dear lady, I have not been so disinterested—I dare hope for a reward, more valuable *to me* than would be the riches of Golconda, were they now at my feet.'

" ' Your language is to me, sir, unintelligible.'

" ' I will endeavour then to render it intelligible.—From the time I first saw you through the convent grate, I perceived your countenance indicated the possession of every amiable quality:—when I heard you described by my sisters, my heart listened with enthusiasm to the detail of your vir-

tues; and this sensation increased whenever you were made the subject of conversation. But when I had seen and conversed with you, I found such innocence, such goodness, blended with talents that might honour a throne, that I resolved to make it the study of my life to deserve you. If I have done the least good, *you* not *I* was the cause of it. It was to imitate your bright example, to gain your esteem:—But this declaration may alarm your delicate mind. I own, in any other than the present case, it would be premature;—yet, if you could prevail with yourself to receive me, without repugnance, as your lawful protector, I would devote the remainder of my days to the delightful study of rendering you happy. The only friend which the moment presents is the abbé: his holy function will not permit him to deceive. I will hasten for him, and we will submit to his counsel.'

"In a few minutes they returned together. But before any representation could

be made, a footman came to inform the abbé a gentleman had inquired for him by name; that he (the footman) said the abbé was out; and the gentleman desired he might be told that he should call on *particular business* at eight in the evening.

" ' Then,' said Mr. B——, ' we must begone before that time... Let every thing be ready by four o'clock.'

" The servant promised to be punctual, and withdrew.

" ' Now,' said Mr. B——, addressing the abbé, ' this is a new motive for our hasty decision. It is my sincere hope (indeed I am ready, should occasion require, to spill my blood in the cause), that we shall manage to conduct you safe to the English shore. Yet, should matters so turn out, notwithstanding our precaution, that we lose you, would it not be better for this young lady that I should become her lawful protector?—What is your opinion, my friend?'

"The poor abbé, too much engrossed with the apprehension of his own danger, answered mechanically 'I think as you do, sir.'

"'The emergency of the case admits not of delay,' said Mr. B——: 'Can you take me with all my faults? will you venture to believe that I will endeavour to make you happy?' and kneeling at my feet added, 'Here do I solemnly pledge my word, in the sight of God, whose presence is universal, and of my friend the abbé, to love, cherish, and protect you to the hour of my death—Will you allow M. Houlier to join our hands?'

"The strangeness of my situation so overpowered my senses, that I could not think with any precision. I pressed the sacred cross to my heart—No internal warning forbade the act, and I silently permitted him to fetch the abbé his book.

"We both stood up; and the priest went through that part of the marriage ceremony

prior to putting on the ring. When he came to that, not one of us had a ring. Mr. B—— begged our patience five minutes: he took his hat, and I believe in less time returned with one, which was put on my finger, and the ceremony was concluded.

"We then recollected that we ought to have had a witness. To obviate any difficulty on that account, the priest wrote a certificate of our marriage; the place, day, and hour; for Mr. B——'s servant was absent, and we dared not ask a stranger, lest the abbé should be betrayed, as only the priests who had taken the national oath were allowed to officiate. Never did any one enter the marriage state in a more hasty manner. Every thing conspired to make the scene awful:—the solemn countenance of the priest—the serious demeanour of Mr. B—— and myself—the secrecy we were obliged to observe;—all worked upon my imagination so as to throw over the act greater solemnity.

"As soon as it was over, instead of felicitations, we consulted how best to secure the abbé from detection. It was agreed, that a wig with a queue would be preferable to any other disguise. Accordingly Mr. B—— sallied out in search of one. It was then three o'clock, and he did not return till fifteen minutes before four. It would be difficult to describe the anxiety we endured during that short absence. Without any serious cause of alarm (for he was within the limited time for foreigners to quit the kingdom), I was apprehensive for his safety even to misery. The abbé feared for himself; and both of us uttered an exclamation of delight on his return. The remaining time was spent in equipping the priest, who, with a red waistcoat well stuffed with wadding, and an English great-coat, might have passed for an alderman even in England. I called him my uncle: and as he could pronounce a few English phrases very well, he took care not to make use of any others, nor to speak lest he

should be heard, except when necessity required him to give an answer.

"We got into Mr. B——'s travelling chariot, and with four horses proceeded so quickly that we reached Amiens by two in the morning. We had not taken any refreshment since the day before: I felt quite exhausted. The succession of extraordinary and trying circumstances I had undergone, with fasting so much beyond my usual time, rendered rest and refreshment equally necessary. I would not stop longer than one hour; and during that, my anxiety respecting the abbé made me suffer more than I did in the carriage. As they only waited on my account, we set forward again at three; reached Calais by half past one; and in five hours more were landed at Dover.

"'Here, on English ground,' said Mr. B——, 'we may venture to take our ease. I felicitate you most sincerely, my good abbé; and you, my fair bride;—I may now indulge thoughts of happiness; my felicity

has been the whole subject of my thoughts; the knowledge that I might call you mine has given energy to my feelings, and made me incapable of fatigue—Here we will rest for some days, and draw our plans of future comfort. Hitherto we have thought only of you, abbé; it is your turn now to think of us.'

"'It will be time enough to talk of futurity to-morrow,' replied Houlier;—'I am too happy to think now. But I will go and take off my disguise: perhaps I may then be able to recollect myself.'

"I will not attempt a description of my feelings on a retrospect of the last few days. I wondered at myself—at the events which had so rapidly succeeded each other, and began to feel uneasy at the apprehension that I had done wrong in acting so hastily. Mr. B—— saw what was passing in my mind, and did all he could to reconcile me to circumstances, by convincing me that I could not have acted otherwise with prudence. The abbé was in excellent spirits,

and seemed unbounded in his expressions of gratitude to his preserver. The conversation grew confidential on each side:—Houlier talked of his future prospect, which was far from exhilarating; having nothing better in view than to endeavour to get recommended into some family or school as a French teacher: but this, compared with what he had escaped, was happiness. Mr. B—— looked grave; desired his friend not to think of quitting him at present; said he never stood more in need of advice; and begged he would now oblige him by becoming his guest. This was most cheerfully acceded to. Mr. B—— thus continued: 'I have much to think of, and to arrange: the next step I purpose taking must be to pay my respects at home; after which I shall complete my tour—it is well for me that I began where I ought to have ended. I have not yet seen my own country; and as I may probably, if I live, become a member of its legislature, I wish to make myself acquainted with those subjects most likely

to be useful to me in that exalted station. I find I have much to see and to learn. I wish particularly to gain a knowledge of our manufactures, agriculture, and the different sciences, with which every man ought to be thoroughly acquainted who is employed in the public service. To acquire this, and an insight into manners in general, I calculate, will take me one year at least. Think not, my beloved! my charming Maria! that I shall not regret the necessity of being so long absent—I know your excellent understanding wishes me to be all I ought: and now, that I have so fair an object to please, I shall be more than ever anxious to render myself worthy of the jewel I possess—You, too, would wish, I dare say, to perfect yourself in music, and some of those accomplishments which every sensible and polished female is expected to possess. I would not have criticism find a deficiency in one so eminently qualified to excel: each of us will meet a stimulus to exertion in the other:—and I have been

thinking, that it would perhaps be full as well, and as prudent, if we were not to mention our marriage till I shall have completed my tour, and you your education. In the mean time, dear Maria, if our friend Houlier would remain with you—much as I value his society,—I would cheerfully resign it, that he might protect you in my absence. What say you, my love? I am only nineteen, you but sixteen:—shall we expose ourselves thus half-educated to the remarks of our elders? or shall we, by spending one more year in improvement, present ourselves more worthy of their observation? Your decision, my love, shall be my law—for though, Houlier, I asked your advice, this dear girl above all others has a claim to my time, my employments, my entire self.'

'"With respect to me,' I answered, 'what you have just now proposed seems quite right and agreeable. Indeed I wish rather to live in some retired spot, than to reside in London—I have a horror, an un-

accountable dread, of that great city, where every thing would be new, and to me quite formidable.'

'We will seek a pleasant spot near some town for the convenience of having masters,' said Mr. B——. 'But at present, dear Maria, you will accompany me to the metropolis; I cannot part from you till a further journey makes it necessary. I shall pass my time with you, except the few hours I must spend with my father; and, if you had rather, will take you there also. My only reason for concealing from him my present happiness is, that I may at once present you that finished model I know you will shortly become.'

"The abbé here interrupted us, to make his own remarks on the propriety of Mr. B——'s scheme; and to say he doubted not my sentiments agreed with his: and that for himself, he should ever consider it his duty and his pleasure to contribute to his preserver's happiness in any way that he might point out.

"Two more days were spent at Dover, when it was agreed we should proceed to Canterbury. I was a good deal struck with the difference of manners in the English from those of the French nation. Here each person walks along with the appearance of having his mind intently occupied on business; without any of that lightness, that air of gaiety, which is apparent in every Frenchman, from the king to the beggar. Strange, that in so short a distance there should be such a contrast in the national character! Some attribute this to the mode of living with respect to diet. But that cannot be the reason: because, if we remark a French person who has resided many years in England, we shall find that he retains the same gaiety of mind;—which shows this happy disposition to be constitutional. I call it *happy!* for sure that person must be esteemed to be the happiest, on whom the disappointments of life make the lightest impression.

"From Canterbury we hastened onward

to London. I was so pleased with Shooter's Hill, that I wished very much to have made that my residence during Mr. B——'s absence. But he advised me not to decide till I should have seen other places. From the continued line of houses—streets I should rather call them—which we passed, I had concluded myself to be in London two or three miles before we reached it. My astonishment when I had entered it increased every minute. By three o'clock we alighted at the York Hotel: and as I felt a great objection to remain at the inn, Mr. B—— went in search of lodgings; in which he was so successful, that at eight the same evening we were seated in very comfortable apartments in Sloane-street. The next morning Mr. B—— went to his father's, and returned in a few hours to tell me that he could not, without some very ostensible reason, refuse making his home in Cavendish-square during his stay in town; but that he would take an opportunity of seeing me daily; and desired the abbé would en-

deavour to make the time pass as pleasantly as possible; that he would show me the environs, wishing that I would fix myself near London; saying as he had done before, 'that it was impossible to meet with masters equally good elsewhere.'—Our stay was fifteen days: during which I was heartily sick of the metropolis. I, who had been always accustomed to a number of female companions, felt quite dull and alone in that great city. Whenever I walked abroad, the noise in the streets, and the hurry of business in which every individual I met seemed employed, almost terrified me. But I was pleased with Kentish Town, and there fixed my residence in a neat box. Mr. B—— spent the first week with me in my new habitation, after taking leave of his family previous to his second tour. My establishment consisted of our friend the abbé, two female servants, and a boy. During this week we made many arrangements;—engaged a music- a drawing- and a dancing-master, none of which were to at-

tend me till Mr. B—— had commenced his journey, thinking that the sight of so young a gentleman might have drawn upon me injurious constructions. It was also resolved that in the presence of my masters I should always speak French to the abbé. He was nearly sixty years of age: and we supposed by this method that it would appear to them I was his niece, or some relative whom he had the charge of; it being then a common circumstance to see a French abbé the protector of a young lady, whom the revolution had deprived of, or perhaps separated from, her friends.

"When the day arrived for Mr. B——'s departure, I felt my spirits depressed in a way they had never been before. I was become very much attached to him: his manner was in general very engaging;—with me he took more than common pains to appear so. He was tender, affectionate, polite, attentive; and on every occasion paid so much more deference to my understanding than to my person, that my self-love

was highly gratified. I named the towns from which I was anxious to hear from him, and promised to pay the greatest attention to the masters he had procured for me. I was grateful for the unlimited call he bade me make on his purse, and determined to be very œconomical; knowing that my establishment must cause him many privations. —Thus we parted, with sincere regret on each side, and a hope that we should never be compelled to a second separation.

When he had set out, I felt that I had indeed lost part of myself. The abbé tried in vain to console me: I could not give him my attention. But in a day or two my spirits began to recover; and a wish to surprise Mr. B—— with the progress I hoped to make, induced me to exert myself. Application to my different studies, and the abbé's sensible conversation, soon tranquillized my mind. He was in all respects an estimable man—pious without the least tincture of hypocrisy; his mind well regulated by the practice of religion; and a long ac-

quaintance with the world had rendered him an instructive and pleasant companion: —to him, next to the good nuns, I feel myself indebted;—*they* formed my disposition, *he* cultivated my understanding.

During the first eight months of absence Mr. B. continued very punctual in his correspondence: his letters contained a fund of information and many amusing anecdotes relating to his journey. In one he informed me he had been spending his Christmas holidays at Bath, with his aunt Lady D——; and in several he acknowledged having stopped in a place longer than he intended, from the pressing invitation of one friend or other; and at the end of twelve months informed me he had not yet visited Wales.

"After this last intelligence, Mr. B—— was one whole month without writing. The abbé as well as myself was alarmed at his silence. We had begun to apprehend it was occasioned by illness, when our fears were relieved by the sight of a letter from him dated Dublin. It seemed, that at Chester

he had fallen in with his cousin, the son of Lady D——, who was then going to Ireland. The proposal was made and agreed to. There was no time for writing: Mr. B—— thought he might never meet with so pleasant an opportunity of seeing the sister island, and they set out together. He then proceeded to say, that the only reason he had to lament his long absence was on my account: but he trusted that the increased pleasure he should derive from that very circumstance would amply repay his present regret. I cannot say I felt reconciled to these delays. I did not think his late letters breathed that attachment which they formerly expressed:—his reasons did not appear so cogent to me as I wished them. But what made me more than ever anxious for his return, was the abbé's altered appearance. For the last six weeks he had been affected with such a drowsiness, that he would frequently be overpowered with sleep whilst I was conversing with him. I wished him very much to have advice. He

put me off, saying he would on the morrow: and this he did for many days. One morning I was alarmed at his not appearing as usual to breakfast: the boy went to inquire whether he was well, and returned with the melancholy news that the abbé was no more—that he found him dead in his bed!!! This was the first serious misfortune I had met. My entire ignorance how to act on this trying occasion made me suffer much, and laid me open to many impositions. I stood in need of a friend, and knew not where to apply till I thought of Mr. Roper, one of the priests of Warwick-street chapel; and to him I resolved to address myself in my difficulty. I was fortunate in so doing. He took upon himself the entire management of the funeral, and was to me a kind and able counsellor.

"This circumstance took a large part of the sum which I had received for the half-year's expenditure. I was obliged, for the first time, to write for a supply. My letter remained so long unanswered (owing to

Mr. B——'s frequent change of place) that I began to fear an abundance of evils, when Mr. B——'s answer came very opportunely. But Mr. B—— did not say that he should soon return, neither did he seem so much affected as I expected he would have been at the death of his friend. He spoke of the pleasant manner in which he and his relative passed their time, and gave me to expect his return before his birth-day, which was the 20th of November. I now redoubled my attention to all my studies. My masters told me I was perfect; but as they said so when first I saw them I did not credit them. When at the convent, every hour had its allotted occupation; and now I thought I should be most comfortable were I to follow the same regulation: for this purpose I rose early, and attended the chapel in Warwick-street when the weather permitted my walking so far. After breakfast I received my different masters; they employed me till two, which was my dinner hour: after which I usually took a walk, attended by my fe-

male servant; then amused myself with a book till six, drank tea, and spent the intervening time till nine in needle-work or practising my music and drawing. At nine I said my prayers, read some pages of a religious book, and retired to bed. My occupations seldom varied, as I had no acquaintance whatever except Mr. Roper, who sometimes spared an hour to look in upon me.—Since the death of Mr. Houlier he had directed my choice in reading, and supplied me with a number of books: nor was his selection confined to books of devotion; he brought me those of history, and such of a lighter nature as he conceived might be perused without endangering my morals. He was himself particularly well informed on all subjects, and delighted to make the path of science easy to the understanding.

The abbé had left a good selection of books which he brought with him from France. To these I had occasional recourse; and had often expressed a wish to Mr. Roper

that he would inspect them, thinking he might find some useful to himself, as I had observed several Latin manuscripts. One day in October Mr. Roper called, and said he then had leisure for the inspection. I accompanied him. After Mr. Roper had examined the books, and selected such for his own perusal as he had not met with before, he asked whether I had examined the contents of the drawer under them? I answered, that I had the key, but my curiosity had never prompted me to open the desk. Mr. Roper represented that it was possible there might be papers there relating to the abbé or his friends, and hinted an impropriety in my not having looked immediately after his death.—I felt he was right, and wondered the thought had not occurred to me sooner. I fetched the key, and to the astonishment of both we found a will, and a purse containing five hundred Louis-d'ors. The will was very short. It bequeathed the sum of ten guineas, which was in another small purse, to Mr. B—— for the expenses of his

burial. The books, with the purse containing five hundred Louis-d'ors, were left to Mr. Roper in trust for *Mrs. B——'s use and benefit*. The will was dated June 1794, and was legally executed, and signed by two gentlemen of respectability. There was also a letter directed to Mrs. B——. This greatly affected me; for it contained an attestation of my marriage with Mr. B—— in 1793; and under it these lines: "I re-"quest Mrs. B—— to be assured of my "gratitude for her friendship and unceasing "attention to me; and I make it my most "earnest request, that she never part with "the inclosed attestation of her marriage. "As the peculiar circumstances under which "the ceremony was performed did not ad-"mit of any witness being present, I "thought it right to prove this attestation, "which I have legally done, and got the "within-named gentlemen to sign it."

As my marriage had not been spoken of in the presence of any person, Mr. Roper was ignorant of it. He never having seen

me till after Mr. B——'s departure, supposed me related to the abbé: for, as we had decided not to divulge our marriage at present, I was called Miss Providence; and there was no reason to think my servants even suspected it. On that account I did not at first show Mr. Roper my letter, but merely spoke of the abbé's gratitude in thanking me for my past attentions. Meantime Mr. Roper was re-perusing the will.

"What surprises me," says he, "is, who and where is Mrs. B——? I knew not that my young friend had married;—have you any idea, Miss Providence, where this person is to be found?"

A crimson blush declared what I felt unable to utter. Finding, however, the secret was divulged, I returned with Mr. Roper into the drawing-room, and there related to him the whole of the circumstances.

Mr. Roper's countenance expressed the greatest astonishment. "I am sorry, dear madam," said he, "to find matters as they are; because I think you were both too

young to marry:—you see this is the case, since you are obliged to separate for the purpose of finishing your education. For you, my dear lady, I feel anxiously interested, and hope that Mr. B—— may prove a steady character; he will encounter many difficulties, and it will require more than a common attachment to keep him firm in his resolution. Will you pardon my sincerity in offering a piece of advice? It is, that you do not inform him of this will—the concealment can be no detriment to him, and may be effectually serviceable to you. I cannot boast much personal knowledge of Mr. B——, but I knew his former preceptor intimately: from him I learned that his pupil possessed very opposite qualities;—that he was quick to form attachments, fickle in keeping them; generously open-hearted to the unfortunate, but capriciously jealous of those he loved:—in short, that he had many brilliant qualities, but from an unsteadiness of disposition his character was yet unformed. Such a temper

requires infinite care in the management; and I should think it highly prudent to avoid creating any suspicion in his mind, which has not, and I hope never will, enter there. The knowledge of this attestation might engender a thought that the deceased abbé judged it necessary to provide you with a proof—which we will hope there never will be a necessity to produce: and with regard to the five hundred louis-d'ors, thank God you have such a resource!—you know not what need you may have for it;—at all events, if laid by, it may at the close of life be usefully employed. You shall go with me to Mr. F——, Henrietta-street, Covent-garden. I have cause to think him a liberal-hearted honest man; he will advise us where to place the money advantageously, and the interest of it, should you not want to use it, will, you know, produce you tenfold expended in charity."

You may be sure I followed the advice of my friend. The money was placed on a secure mortgage, and the interest was set-

tled, to be paid into the hands of Mr. Roper for my sole use and benefit.—The next time Mr. Roper called he left me a newspaper, saying, "You may perhaps find a paragraph in this that will prove rather interesting to you."

I soon perceived the following: "It is said "that the accomplished Mr. B—— is shortly "expected at his noble father's in Cavendish-"square, after an absence of four years. "The honourable Mr. B—— is only son "and heir of Lord S——; he will shortly "complete his twenty-first year, which oc-"casion, it is rumoured, is intended to be "celebrated with various scenes of festivity. "The noble mansion has undergone con-"siderable alterations and improvements; "an entire suite of rooms has been fitted up "for the purpose of giving a masked ball, "which is expected to be the most brilliant "thing of the kind for many years."

The following paragraph seemed also to interest Mrs. B——; it ran thus: "We are

"happy to have it in our power to announce "the arrival of the duchess of D—— with "her three charming daughters. Lady Sarah "is to be presented the next drawing-room: "her captivating beauty and extraordinary "accomplishments are likely to prove the "magnet of attraction the ensuing season."

I read, and I sighed. Thought I, "At this ball, where my husband will act so conspicuous a part, will he think of me? or, if he does, may it not be to repent his rash marriage?—Some happy fair, the all-accomplished Lady Sarah, perhaps! will ensnare his heart, and make him regret he ever saw me."

In the midst of these reflections a knock at the door was unheeded; and I was surprised by the appearance of Mr. B——, the object of my thoughts. "My ever dear Maria," said he as he approached me, "you are grown a perfect angel—I need not ask if you are well! Hebe never possessed so fine a bloom! so near London too! What have you done

with yourself, Maria? Who have been your companions?—how have you employed your time?"

"I have preserved my health," I replied; "by keeping good hours; and you have been almost my constant companion. I have worked, played, and sang, to please you; and when tired of those employments, I have given up my whole mind to thinking of you. I was in one of my reveries when you knocked at the door—I did not hear you."

"But, Maria, you do not tell me who visit you?"

"As long as our poor abbé lived no visitor ever came within the house: since his death, Mr. Roper of Warwick-street has called upon me occasionally; but he has little leisure for calls except those of charity. I fancy I was included in that list, as a forlorn being whom no one else pitied;—but indeed I have been too well occupied to want company."

"Maria, you are an astonishing creature! I am glad you have not made many ac-

quaintance. In truth, Maria, I shall be afraid to introduce you;—I could not endure a rival near my throne. Sure loveliness like yours cannot be seen without attracting all hearts. Well, Maria, you are the first to whom I have paid my devoirs: I mean to dedicate one week to love before I show myself in Cavendish-square."

"See how the world expects you, dear Charles!"—giving him the paper: "But why will you remain a week, before you show yourself?"

"Because I want to enjoy your society. It will then be the 16th: I shall miss great part of the fuss of preparation for this birth-day. These are matters of course; we think little of them. the pleasantest part is the fixing my establishment afterwards, when I know what cash my father will lay down. To give him his due, he has always done the thing handsomely;—fifteen hundred per annum was no bad sum for a minor. According to that, he will surely

allow me five thousand when I become of age!"

"My dear Charles, we should be much happier upon less. I am sure two thousand, in a neat small house like that in Sloane-street, would give us all we want: I can never bear the bustle of company.—But tell me, Charles—what will you say, when you inform your father of the marriage? Will he not be angry that you have acted in that instance without his knowledge?—really his conduct to you merited all your confidence."

"To say the truth," replied Charles, "I almost dread to tell him. But it will be time enough to talk of this when I have seen my father."

"I would not for the world, Charles, bring his anger upon you;—yet I feel I should be proud to be your acknowledged wife. For example, What will my servant Jane suppose? I must to-night inform her of the fact."

"Do not be guilty of so mad an action," said Mr. B——. "Would you destroy me with my father for ever, by suffering a circumstance to reach his ear through the tattling of a servant, which ought to be communicated with the greatest caution? As you value my affection, say not a word to Jane; she has no right to suppose any thing:—believe me, it is your ignorance of the world which could alone give rise to such a thought: servants do not trouble themselves with these every-day trifles. But, my dearest love, let not you and I quarrel with our means of happiness—Come, give me a song."

The sentiments which Mr. B—— brought back with him seemed to me quite altered from those I had thought he possessed;—I was disappointed, hurt, and in no humour to sing. However, I resolved to try to please him.—He professed himself delighted; and, in more ecstasy than I thought a song warranted, "Why, Maria," he exclaimed, "you are the best copyist of Catalani I ever met

with—you must have been a constant attendant at the Opera?"

"I never was at it," I replied. To which he seemed almost incredulous, and paid me compliments that I blushed to hear even from a husband.

The next day gave a proof of Mr. B——'s change of humour:—for immediately after breakfast he spoke of going to his father's. I reminded him of the week he promised to spend with me; when he hastily recollected himself, "Oh! I forgot; so I did promise to stay with you," said Mr. B——. "Well, where shall we go? what shall we do? I shall be dead if we remain here all day;—come, let us have some music." Then ordering his servant to bring the flute, he accompanied me through several pieces with so much taste, that I told him a few of his lessons would benefit me more than a year's attendance from my master. In the evening he proposed taking me to some place of amusement: "We dare not go to the theatre," said he; "for I should be likely to

be recognised by some acquaintance; and it would never do for my father to *hear* of my being in town." So after talking the matter over, we resolved to sit by our own fire-side that night, and that the next day he should finish his confinement by showing himself in Cavendish-square.

I felt equally as anxious as himself that he should go there; and he went the next morning. But I thought the time long till eight in the evening, when he called for only a few minutes; told me his father looked much worse than when he had seen him before; that he and the family testified great pleasure at his return; that there was no opportunity for private conversation of any kind; and that in the course of the following day he would pass some hours with me. Accordingly he did so; and every day spent part of his time at Kentish Town. On the one preceding the ball he produced a number of tickets; they were printed ones, and were numbered in the following manner.

ADMISSION TICKET.

No. 12.

Nov. 20th. Lord S——'s Masquerade,

CAVENDISH-SQUARE.

The visitors' names were yet to be added. As I held the tickets, a thought occurred to me to take one. Mr. B——'s back was towards me: I laid one in my work-table. Without noticing the action, he soon after put the rest carelessly into his pocket. On leaving me he said, "Well, Maria, I shall not be able to see you to-morrow, there will be company to breakfast; and as you know I am become a great personage I shall be expected to be visible."

"Indeed, Charles," I replied, "you must pardon me, if I express some regret that I am not permitted to share your joy—I, who wish your happiness so much—who, of all earthly beings, shall feel most interested for you! How it would have delighted me to have been a partaker of your felicity! to have seen you the object of all beholders!

O Charles! what have I done to be denied this pleasure!—when shall I become your acknowledged wife?"

"As soon, my angel, as I can obtain a private interview with my father. Believe me, this fuss and parade will give me much more pain than pleasure, if it be the means of causing you one unhappy hour. Be assured that you shall see me early the day after to-morrow—Promise me, that you will try to amuse yourself." So saying, without waiting an answer, he hastened out of the room.

I now began to think in what manner I could go to the masquerade. I examined the ticket, and found it to be No. 12. Whose name should I write? Here was a grand difficulty. My own was out of the question. I had heard Mr. B—— say that his cousin Miss Forester was too ill to go out:—her name then I thought I might use with safety; and I wrote it. The next thing to be considered was a dress. I supposed it necessary to assume some character;

about which I was at a great loss, because I knew my inability to support any. At last I thought of the habit of a nun. This pleased me for two reasons:—I need not speak to any one; and I could make my dress myself. Accordingly I sent Jane to buy cambric and kerseymere; and with her assistance cut out the habit and veils for a novice of the order of my own convent. I now wanted nothing but a mask. This I found I must employ Jane to purchase: and knowing that I could not do without her assistance, I told her it was with the design of surprising Mr. B—— that I should go to the masquerade: "He thinks I shall not be there: so, Jane, you must not hint my intention to any of his servants, should you see them;—but go and procure me a mask; let it have an innocent countenance, such as would suit a girl of eighteen, without any thing particularly ludicrous."

In less than an hour Jane returned: She had executed my commission to a wish; and really had brought a mask which I

thought bore some resemblance to our poor sister Gertrude. I had now every thing ready:—but I neither knew the hour of meeting, nor in what character Mr. B—— meant to exhibit. Both these circumstances I learnt the next morning; for Mr. B——, finding an hour's leisure before dinner, surprised me with a visit: and as it was natural I should feel curious, he gave me all the information he could; said he expected the company would begin to arrive about ten; that he should go with a party of mountaineers, he as Octavian, and one of the ladies as Floranthe. I thought I perceived the colour flush his cheek:—my curiosity was excited; and I asked, "Which of the ladies?"

"I believe, one of the duchess of D——'s daughters."

Had I not before made up my mind to go to Cavendish-square, this information would have determined me. "But," continued Mr. B——, "I shall vary my dress and character during the evening."

His watch told him his time was expired; and he left me, requesting I would get an entertaining book, and promised to give me a faithful account next day of the night's proceedings.

It was now three o'clock:—time seemed to move slowly till ten. I then commenced my preparation; thinking by making my entrance rather late I should be less likely to be noticed: for, as this was a private party, I supposed the number could not be great. My task of dressing over, I concealed my hair entirely; and presented such a real resemblance of sister Gertrude, that I was quite pleased with my own appearance. A hackney coach was then called; and with only Jane I sallied forth:—fearful of trusting Thomas, I dispensed with his attendance. As I drew near the square, the roll of carriages sounded in all directions. I was kept waiting a considerable time, for the string before me to draw from the door. At last the step was let down, and I found myself on the point of entering. My spi-

rits so far failed me, that when the coachman asked at what hour he should come, I left it to Jane to answer; for I really had not power to utter a syllable. But soon the rural grove of evergreens through which I was passing recalled my senses: I resolved to force my spirits, and try to imitate in some degree the manners of others, that I might not appear singular. At the end of the grove was a temple, in which was a porter who received the tickets; and I saw that he wrote the names in a book. This alarmed me, lest any inquiry should be made relating to mine. But all these thoughts vanished when two folding doors were thrown open, and presented to my astonished sight the interior of an Egyptian hall. Its extent seemed to me boundless, from the number of personages that reached as far as I could see. The blaze of lights, the confused noise, and the appearance of every character which the human shape ever assumed, so overpowered and terrified me, that I would have given all I valu-

ed in the world to have been at home. I was near fainting with fright, when a friar approached and supported me, saying "Surely this lovely novice has but now emerged from her cell!—What sins, fair lady, have you committed, to impose this severe penance on yourself?"

"The sin of disobedience," I replied; and hurried to get on one side: for I perceived a group of mountaineers, and at present felt I was not in a situation to encounter Mr. B——. In my haste I did not perceive the friar was at my elbow, until I heard him say, "Are you in search of one of your sisterhood, fair penitent? or are you fearful the abbess should overtake you?"

Here another friar drew the first away by the sleeve; and I was glad to find myself alone amidst, as the newspapers stated, "eight hundred people."

Perceiving an ottoman in one of the recesses, I went and seated myself, and began to examine the strange medley before me: in which amusement I had not pro-

ceeded many minutes, before the same party of mountaineers passed me, and I was certain I descried Mr. B—— in the figure of Octavian, and almost as sure that Floranthe was personated by Lady Sarah. The latter idea struck me, from the constant attention Mr. B—— paid to that character. My eyes followed them in all directions, and every where Octavian accompanied Floranthe.

Whilst my attention and thoughts were thus employed I was frequently spoken to; but having very little to say, as I avoided answering as much as possible, I passed almost unnoticed. Not so my habit: I frequently heard it remarked, "This is the best dressed nun I ever met—Do you know who she is? her neat figure is admirable." A set of gipsies had nearly surrounded me, when I again espied the family group; but instead of Octavian, a Jew now addressed Floranthe: he had a box of elegant trinkets, and was pressing her to select a beautiful pearl necklace; saying, "Inteed, good

lady, me vill become cood Christian if you vill vear dish, me vill never ask shent per shent again."

A gentleman called out—"Do, fair lady, convert the Jew; he never may be in such another pious humour." I got near enough to hear him say, as he fastened the necklace about her neck, "Would you, lovely Floranthe, think of the Jew when you wear this envied bauble, he would wish it might never quit you." I heard no more. My first acquaintance, the friar, taking my hand, pulled me toward the basket; saying to the Jew, "Cannot you find a little relic for this fair penitent? I fancy she is disappointed at not meeting her father confessor here, for she seems to have been searching for something she has not yet found."

"Is it a heart?" asked the Jew.

"It is indeed—a valuable one," I replied; "and which I fear I shall never find again."

"Did you bring it with you?" asked the friar.

"I came in search of it," said I.

"How fortunate!" said the friar, pointing to a fortune-teller then walking our way—"Do, my good friend, come here and try the power of magic upon this young novice, who came in search of a wandering heart—Can you give her any intelligence where to recover it?"

A tall gigantic figure now drew a circle with his wand: and after making certain figures within the ring, "Answer me fairly—Is the heart you search the property of a married, or a single man?"

"I must not divulge family secrets," said I.

"I perfectly comprehend the matter," continued the necromancer. "'Twas yours," (pointing his finger to me); "'Tis her's," (doing the same towards Floranthe); "and may be any one's to morrow:—These butterfly hearts are not worth owning. Go, lady, count your beads in your cell; the world is no place for you." And straight he walked away with another party, who ea-

gerly came to seek his advice,—whilst I stood wondering. His words seemed almost prophetic. Floranthe looked also as if they had excited her consideration.

The Jew was now surrounded by other ladies, all anxious to view his trinkets, which he soon shared among the motley group; and went, he told us, to replenish his box. He passed me so close that I followed him just near enough to whisper, "Suppose the fortune-teller should tell Mrs. B—— of the necklace?" As I spoke I laid my hand on his arm, and felt it tremble. In a moment I became aware of my imprudence, and retired a few paces back, resolving to make my escape during his absence. For this purpose I kept within sight of the door: and when the Jew had been gone, as I supposed, sufficient time to reach his apartment, I made my way toward the temple, designing to request a footman to call me a hackney coach. How was I struck to see the Jew in conversation with the porter—but without his mask.

It was now my turn to tremble, which I did from head to foot. "Whither, fair recluse, are you escaping?" said Mr. B——.

"I am unwell," I replied, "from the heat of the room; and am going to request a footman to call me a coach."

"Go," said Mr. B—— to the porter, "tell my footman to procure this lady a chair instantly, and to see her safe wherever she chooses to be conveyed—Sorry am I that my present situation prevents my taking that charge upon myself; but my man is steady, you may depend upon him."

My distress had now reached its summit: —I felt myself falling. He carried me in his arms to an adjoining room, where he untied my mask, to make me, as he said, take some refreshment. Fear at that moment preserved my senses. As the mask dropped I knelt down, and grasping his knees begged he would forgive me! At the same instant the servant came to say "the chair was ready."

"There is no occasion for the chair, or

your attendance," said Mr. B——, "I shall take care of the lady myself." So raising me up he presented his hand, and led me in silence through the grove I had so much admired on my entrance. At the door he told a footman to let down the step of a carriage. We got into it. Neither spoke till we came to the top of Kentish Town. He then desired the man to wait a few minutes for his return; and putting my arm through his, walked with me to my door; where, for the first time, he addressed me, saying, "Notwithstanding your prudence, madam, I have taken more care of you than you did of yourself. I shall request an account of your very extraordinary conduct to-morrow. Madam, good night."

My heart was too full to speak. When Jane with an inquiring face opened the door I ran into the parlour, and there bemoaned my misfortune, raved at the masquerade, and blamed poor Jane for the assistance she had given me on the occasion.

Mrs. Fisher here closed the paper for that

night. And whilst she takes her repose, some family transactions that are nearly related with this work shall be explained.

Lord S——, the father of Mr. B——, was at this period a leading man in the cabinet. He had always been a strong adherent to the crown, had voted with the ministers on all occasions, and had employed his interest in Ireland very successfully. He could at any time ensure a member for B——, and had rendered other notable services to his country, for which his country was about to confer upon him the honour of a peerage. This long-looked-for blessing was now drawing near. Two days before his son's birth-day he summoned him to his study, for the purpose of giving him the above intelligence. "And now, my dear Charles," said the father, "I have attained every comfort on this side the grave, save one—the seeing you married. And on that subject I have a scheme to propose which will complete our temporal happiness. For the honourable alliance I am going to pro-

pose you are indebted to my prudence in avoiding the gaming-table, and thus letting my estates accumulate, whilst others have spent theirs in extravagance and folly.—To the point, however. A dukedom, my dear boy, courts our acceptance. Last month the duke and duchess of D—— brought their lovely family to town. The duke called upon me: he has long been my debtor;—however, this year his duchess has been particularly out of luck, and I have advanced him sixty thousand pounds on his ——shire estate: he had four thousand from me last year; and I believe I should not have given the last sum quite so easily, but the beautiful Lady Sarah has been presented. Bless me, boy! it makes an old man young to look at her: she is the finest woman I ever beheld! Well, the duke offers her to you: The duke used these words 'Let your son win her and wear her.' Upon this lady's account I will keep your birth-day splendidly, to give you the opportunity of making acquaintance.—A masquerade has always

charms for a woman. There you can come to the point at once, and do more in one night than in three months formal courtship. You must not stand shilly-shally—every man admires her—every young man, who dares, will be your rival: therefore, Charles, I say with the duke, 'Win her and wear her.' The day you sign the marriage articles I will give up the mortgage, and what more I can spare. There is a draft on Drummond's for five thousand pounds to supply you with ready cash. Be prudent; but purchase some elegant trinkets, what you think may please Lady Sarah. I have invited the family to spend the week here from the 20th: they have accepted the invitation. You will be a poor lover—unlike your father, Charles—if you cannot gain her affection with a week's close attention."

Mr. B—— was hurt when he considered his marriage with Maria, whom he really loved. But he felt it had been a boyish attachment; wished every hour he had never formed it; and dreaded more than any thing

his father's knowledge of the matter. But on this head he felt easy; since Houlier, the only witness of the transaction, was dead, and he did not suppose any other person in the world knew that he was *really married.* His servants thought that he kept a mistress in Kentish Town: her being beautiful was in their opinion a sufficient excuse;—and though Mrs. B—— imagined her maid Jane concluded her married, Jane had been too long accustomed to lords and ladies to think every intimacy like this a legal one. As to her calling herself Mrs. B—— in her own family, that was a stale story:—So that, in fact, all who knew Maria thought her the mistress of Mr. B——, except her friend Mr. Roper.

Mr. B—— was first introduced to Lady Sarah at his father's breakfast-table, on the 20th. She more than verified all he had heard: she seemed every thing desirable. Her figure was extremely good—tall, with just as much of the Grecian bend as made it graceful; her eyes were blue, her nose

aquiline, and the contour of her face was particularly pleasing. She was handsome, without being regularly beautiful: there was great softness in her eye, and a languor about her countenance which made her appear very interesting. But, compared with Maria, she was neither so handsome, nor had she that energy of expression. But then Lady Sarah had the advantage in manners:—she was mistress of a certain ease and complacency in her address, which are only to be acquired by an intercourse with the first circles in society. Her mother had initiated Lady S. in all these acquirements:—she smiled when it was proper to smile To be sure she never frowned, because unmarried females could gain nothing by a frown. In short, she had learned to deceive with grace, which, in the language of the great world, is called *ton*.

Mr. B—— was flattered with the attention Lady Sarah gave him at the masquerade. After the discovery he had made respecting his wife, his anger operated in favour

of his new charmer: he redoubled his attentions towards her; and during the week he had said and done every thing his father wished:—and much more than he ought to have said and done; for he had gained the lady's affection, and behaved in a manner that showed the world he was a favoured man. The newspapers teemed with hints that "A certain young nobleman, who had just "attained his twenty-first year, was soon to "lead to the altar the amiable daughter of "a certain duke." And the world kindly congratulated the two families on the happiness they were likely to derive from this blessed union. Meantime Maria was on thorns; hourly expecting Mr. B——, and hourly disappointed, for the space of one whole week.

We will now return to Mrs. Fisher, who is ready to resume her lecture—being a continuation of Maria's letter to Mrs. Stuart.

A whole week passed in vain expectation of seeing Mr. B——. The only visitor

during that time was Mr. Roper, to whom I was happy to relate the whole circumstance. He blamed me for going to the masquerade; said it was indulging a dangerous curiosity: "It was seeking to make yourself unhappy," said Mr. Roper; "for you are not ignorant that your husband must be polite to his guests. He was there in the character of an unmarried man; of course it was expected he should utter compliments he did not mean, which perhaps deluded only yourself. You had worked up your mind to jealousy before you went out;—that idea, in your eyes, tainted all his words and actions. I would advise that you acknowledge the whole truth—candour is the best security for conjugal affection; avow the truth, and the next time I have the honour to see you, I trust Mr. B—— and you will be better friends than ever."

When Mr. B—— called I followed my friend's advice. I gave him a minute account of having taken the ticket, making my dress, and every thought I had con-

ceived on the occasion. He listened to me with greater patience than I had expected. When I had finished, he said, "Maria, I know that you have told me the real truth: there is an expression in your countenance which tells me more than words how different you are from the women I have lately associated with:—Were all like you, there would be no necessity for deceit."

"My education, Charles, has been different from that of the generality of women: to this source I am indebted for my love of truth.—You have made me so happy by your willing forgiveness, that at this moment I feel I have but one wish ungratified!"

"I guess that wish, Maria. You have been candid with me, I shall be so with you. But you will have *much* to forgive.—My father talked to me of marriage the other day: I had not the courage to own that I had disposed of myself without his knowledge. He has been an excellent parent to me; but he has some strange notions. To say the fact, he looks very ill; so much so,

that I have taken it into my head that he will not be long with us; and I feared to hasten his end by a premature disclosure of my conduct, and thought it better to see the present winter over."

"Suppose, Charles, he should actually mention a particular lady?"

"I would put him off. You know, my love, I have yet to visit Wales; that will occupy me most of the summer: by that time a something tells me that he will be in better health, or the inhabitant of a better world!"

"God avert that misfortune long from you, Charles!"

"So should I say. But certainly his death would leave me master of my actions: —It is you, dear Maria, tha]feel for, not myself."

"Then be assured I am sufficiently happy in your affections:—so I possess your heart, the whole world beside is indifferent to me. Could I but be your companion, the sharer

of your pleasures, the partaker of your employments!"

"Will you accompany me in my tour through Wales, Maria?"

"I should enjoy it much," I replied, "if you can manage to take me with you."

"I will take you, Maria. So rest satisfied—Good night: I will never be so long absent from you again."

Thus ended a conversation which I had dreaded; and from which, in fact, I had derived the greatest pleasure. I have since learned that I was indebted for this kindness to the qualms of his conscience. He had entered into engagements with Lady Sarah, which, at the time he looked at her, he meant to keep. On his road to my house he searched his heart: He felt he loved me sincerely; he wished also for Lady Sarah—she was at that time the world's idol. His self-love was gratified in being believed a favoured man. He regarded a connexion with her as the ladder to greatness. And

what man can resist greatness? Very few Thus Mr. B—— was perplexed by contending passions. The most predominant when he reached my door, was a sense of the injustice he had done me: and as his heart was naturally good it led him to soften my feelings and quiet his own.

More than a month passed away in tolerable ease by me—in a round of splendour by Mr. B——, whose father had obtained the earldom. I shall now therefore call my husband by his title, Lord S——. The family had gone through the ceremony of presentation on assuming their new titles, and all was quietly arranged for the journey into Wales, which Lord S—— commenced on the sixth of February, leaving me to follow a week afterwards, he having a friend at Oxford with whom he intended to spend a few days. Gloucester was appointed the place of our meeting. On this occasion I gave up my house at Kentish Town, parted with the cook and Thomas, and with Jane travelled post, as agreed on, till we

reached our destined spot, Gloucester. It was then the 19th—we were the first: Lord S—— arrived on the day following, and hurried us forward the same hour. We crossed the Severn, and slept that night at Chepstow. I observed to my lord "this was not a good way for him to see the country."

"I am travelling in this haste," said he, "merely to procure you a comfortable resting-place, whilst I pursue the object of my journey. I am told that the valleys in North Wales are particularly beautiful, and that we are likely to find a snug cottage there to please our fancy:—it is nearly a central situation, which would particularly suit, from which I could visit the surrounding counties, and make my home with you."

"I should have preferred," I said, "the accompanying you: but in that respect, as you please."

On the second night we reached Dolgelly. And certainly the next day I was charmed with a beautiful cottage about half a mile

from the town, at the foot of the grand mountain Cader Idris. It belonged to a family who spent their winter in England, and were not expected till the end of May. Lord S—— first took the circuit of North Wales, proceeding along the coast. He told me he should return to me within a fortnight. At the end of three weeks his servant came with a verbal message, informing me his master had unexpectedly met with the three Mr. Blounts at Snowdon:—as they had been schoolmates and were making the same tour, he could not avoid joining them as far as Denbigh, where his friends were engaged to spend a month with Sir W. W——; that he should then hasten to me: and desired, should I have occasion to quit the cottage before his arrival, that I would wait for him at Dolgelly.

This really happened to be the case. I had quitted my cottage three days when Lord S—— joined me on the 29th of May. At first I could not help reproaching him for his neglect. But he was in high spirits;

swore "I was an angel! And, to tell the truth," said he, "I did come—venturing on your usual good-humour—to ask a further respite, and to take you nearer to me. The baronet I am now with is such good company, that I should like another fortnight with him. We are all bachelors when with him; and you would be within a ride from me at Holywell. It is a pretty romantic place—Knowing your veneration for miracles first made me select it for you. What say you, Maria?"

"That I wish I had not left Kentish Town. Besides, my lord, what will the earl say?"

"That he is delighted I have made this intimacy."

"Well, my lord, I have only to submit, as in duty bound. But will you accompany me to Holywell?"

"I am come purposely, Maria; the groom shall lead my horse, and we will, if you please, set out at six to-morrow morning. And now, my angel, not one word more of

chiding—Tell me, How have you employed your time?"

"Chiefly in grumbling at your silence, and in sketching views along this river—But why did you not write?"

"I was in hopes your good sense would have assigned the reason why I deprived myself of what would have given me the greatest pleasure. You must be aware that had I written, the direction would have disclosed my marriage. How could we be certain that it would not have reached my father in an improper manner? Servants, you know, ought never to be trusted with secrets."

"But, my lord, *your* servants, as well as *mine*, know that I am your wife."

"To be sure, Maria, they do. They know also that it has not been publicly acknowledged:—their own interest will keep them silent; but a letter might have been seen by other people in this house. A lord and lady here would have created such wonder that we should have had the natives coming to stare at us—a thing as disagree-

able to you, and more so than it would have been to me."

Thus lightly did my lord pass every thing over.—To Holywell we went: There he took part of a house; and I was the more satisfied with my situation, there being a chapel: and having always experienced the greatest comfort from the duties of religion, my mind grew more easy when I had the means of performing them. At chapel I met a lady who had been educated in the same convent that I was. I had often heard her spoken of, and longed to converse with her. She was the widow of Mr. B——, a woman who had all her life been much respected for her virtues. Here she had retired with a maiden sister, to whom she was strongly attached. Her handsome jointure, and connexions in high life, made her generally known: these, with the excellence of her private character, served to render her the first personage in the place. After I had been in my new house ten days, Mrs. B—— honoured me with a visit. She

politely signified her wish to make my residence less dull, by desiring me to spend as much of my time with her as I could conveniently spare. This was too agreeable an invitation for me to refuse: I eagerly accepted her offer of passing that day with her. But I was rather surprised to hear her call me "Lady S——." Supposing it, however, to arise from Lord S——'s having accompanied me, I was very glad; though I did not wish to publish a circumstance as yet unknown: yet I felt it due both to her and to myself, that Mrs. B—— should know who the person was she so kindly entertained, and had resolved from the first to inform her of my exact situation. This (to me disagreeable part) was thus done away with, and I dismissed the subject from my thoughts.

I remained six weeks in the enjoyment of every comfort at Holywell; except that I neither heard nor saw any thing of Lord S——. Still my time passed more happily than it had done from the period of my

quitting Paris. Now I began to taste the pleasures of society: I grew more and more attached to the spot every day; and thought if I were doomed to endure my lord's neglect, still I was in possession of many advantages whereby to soften its poignancy. These fears I kept to myself, and seldom made lord S—— the subject of conversation, except to say that I expected him daily.

But even here I was not to be long at ease. Mrs. B—— took in a daily paper. At times I found great amusement in perusing it: but one morning I was struck at the sight of the following paragraph: "Lord S——, with a party of friends, is "spending a convivial time at a hospitable "mansion in North Wales; his return is "looked for in autumn, that being the "time fixed for his lordship to lead the "beautiful lady S—— to the altar"—The paper dropped from my hand.

Mrs. B—— seeing me distressed, asked me to walk with her in the garden; and

then said, "My dear lady S——, I am aware of your feelings; there seems a mystery which I own I should like to penetrate, because I feel convinced, from all I have seen of you, that it places you in a situation you by no means deserve."

"To-day," I replied, "dear madam, I really feel too much from surprise—I cannot speak on the subject: but if you will give me leave, to-morrow I will explain to you every circumstance of my marriage; and as you are not alone, perhaps you would do me the favour of calling upon me; we shall then be without interruption:—and let me beg you will retain the good opinion you have kindly encouraged in my favour. I have nothing to relate which ought to diminish it."

I then said, as I felt no inclination for company, I should be glad if Mrs. B—— would excuse my longer stay. She desired I would do as most pleasant to myself. I wished her a good morning, having appointed twelve next day for her visit.

I had returned home, and was puzzling

myself in vain to find what could have given rise to the strange paragraph, when lord S—— unexpectedly made his appearance. I say unexpectedly, for he had latterly shown himself so totally neglectful of me that I was surprised to see him; and, to own the truth, knew not how to conduct myself towards him. I extended my hand; but my heart did not accompany me when I said, "My lord, I am glad to see you." I suppose he was aware of the coldness of my manner; for he observed, "Why, Maria, your heart and your hand do not seem to agree."

"Indeed, my lord," I replied, "I find it very difficult to support the alternate proofs of affection and neglect I have lately experienced from you. I wish to have and to show but one feeling—a constant regard for your lordship; but you will not suffer me to do so."

"For pity sake, dear Maria, allow something to company,—to the allurements of wine and cards."

"Oh, my lord! that you would admit

my society! I would exert the influence of love to draw you from those baneful pursuits; and your presence would preserve me from being the object of slander and infamy."

"What has happened, dearest Maria? If any man has dared to offend you, my arm is ready to avenge the insult."

"Have you seen yesterday's paper, my lord?—the public has insulted me in that."

"Mere bagatelle! Now am I convinced, my sweet Maria, that it is to *ennui* alone you owe such gloomy thoughts—Exert that fine understanding which made me yours—which will always bind me to you; then you will know that my father's bare mention of a wife for me would raise a million of reports—Novelty is the goddess most courted by the world; and so that a thing be new, no matter whether it be true or false:—people will read news—printers will print news; and the better grace a lie is told with, the more the world honours the publisher. Away with these mopish thoughts,

Maria; Come, come, do the honours—show me the beauties of the place."

I felt no inclination for going abroad, so requested Mr. B—— to give me a description of his journey; which he did in so pleasant a manner that the evening appeared to pass quickly.

Nothing particular occurred till twelve the next morning, when a loud knocking at the door announced the arrival of a visitor.

Twenty times I had been tempted to tell Lord S—— of the notice Mrs. B—— had taken of me: but a natural unwillingness to speak on a matter where any partial concealment seemed necessary prevented me. I felt certain of not seeing her, because I concluded she would hear of Lord S——'s arrival, and on that account postpone her call. However, she made her entrance during my reverie; and to the astonishment of Lord S—— I introduced her, saying "that I was greatly indebted to this lady for having passed my time so pleasantly."

He bowed awkwardly. I had never seen him so little himself: nor did his appearance improve when she said to him, "I think, my lord, your lady is endowed with wonderful patience, which I hope you are come to reward, by suffering the same penance yourself; and that you will favour us by sharing your company with us." To which Lord S—— stammered out, "You do me honour, madam." He bit his lips:—then too much irritated to remain on his seat, he walked towards the window. No doubt Mrs. B—— perceived that matrimonial strife was brewing, and prudently avoided its burst, by rather abruptly wishing us good morning: saying to me, "I hope, Lady S——, you will be so good as to introduce your lord at Grove-house."

No sooner was Mrs. B—— fairly out of hearing than Lord S—— pulled the bell with a violence that broke the wire. When the servant came, he ordered a chaise to be ready in an hour. Then turning to me, his face crimsoned with rage, "Madam," said

he, "you are worse than mad! you have betrayed your marriage to Mrs. B——; she will intrust it to her chaplain, and he to a dozen canting priests, till it becomes blazoned in my father's ears. This is the last time, madam, you shall accompany me —Sure that man's a fool that trusts himself to a prating woman!"

"Pray, my lord, be more composed: I have never mentioned our marriage to Mrs. B——. When first she called, it was by your title she addressed me:—I could not contradict the truth, my lord."

"The only thing you can now do to save me with my father," he replied, rather more appeased, "is to prevent the news reaching London before we do; which may be easily done by your writing a note."

"How, my lord?"

"Present your respects to Mrs. B——; inform her that owing to my protracted journey we are under the necessity of quitting this place immediately; thank her for her civility, and express your regret at not

having it in your power to wait upon her before we leave; and say, that owing to some domestic events *Mrs. B—— is respectfully requested not to mention Lord S——'s marriage at present.*"

"This I can easily do, my lord."

"Then, my angel, set about it directly; as I would not have you guilty of a breach of good manners in leaving Holywell without addressing Mrs. B——, since she has been civil to you: the servant can deliver the note before our departure. Dearest Maria, forgive my pettishness; and be assured it is more on *your* account than my *own* that I am anxious not to offend my father. To be deprived of his paltry gold would affect me little; but I know how your delicate feelings would be hurt to occasion that loss—Then, dear girl, pronounce my forgiveness! You must proceed with Jane to London:—the obligation I am under of fulfilling my promise to make the baronet a second visit prevents my having the pleasure of accompanying you.

Here is a fifty-pound note; you can take any house you please;—depend upon seeing me by the time you are settled."

"But how am I to inform you, my lord, where to find me?"

"Write me a line to be left at the post-office, Shrewsbury; I shall inquire for it on my road home."

The chaise now drove up to the door. I got into it with Jane.

The author here interrupts the narrative to relate what passed at Holywell immediately after Maria's departure.

No sooner had the carriage proceeded out of sight, than Lord S—— remanded his horses, which had been brought out, and walked to Grove-house; meditating a scheme which was to blast for ever the fame of his innocent wife.

It so fell out that every thing happened in favour of his plot. Mrs. B—— was at home, to whom he was immediately ad-

mitted; and with an embarrassed air began to express "how deeply he felt hurt that any part of *his* conduct should have occasioned a lady of *her respectability* to entertain a female unworthy of her notice.—Indeed," he added, "from the title by which you addressed her, I fear, madam, you have been so far imposed upon as to suppose that female my wife?"

"I believed that to be the case," replied Mrs. B——: "I was informed she was so, on her arrival here: her conduct confirmed the report; and I cannot help saying that her manners and behaviour have been, in my presence, every way proper and pleasing. Nor had I the smallest doubt, till this week's paper informed me of the connexion expected to take place between your lordship's family and that of a certain duke. I then, indeed, could not help feeling great surprise, and mentioned it to the unfortunate lady we are now speaking of:—she appointed yesterday for an explanation. It was to obtain that, I called upon her. In

the few minutes I saw you together I could perceive a something not right; and this morning my doubts were authorized by this note," producing the one written by Maria as dictated by Lord S——.

At this sight he affected utter astonishment; expressed himself better satisfied, however, that she had made some acknowledgement of her error; and assured her of his regret for the circumstance having happened.

Mrs. B——, who was really a most virtuous woman, finished the subject by saying, " My lord, allow me to observe, that my age and my conduct through life leave nothing to apprehend from any consequence to myself; I am only sorry that one of your noble alliance, from whose example posterity ought to look for edification, should give into errors so detrimental to morals and the good of society. This young woman seems naturally to be blest with a virtuous mind. Reflect seriously, my lord, upon the dreadful consequences of that si-

tuation into which you have brought her; and, as your approaching marriage renders your separation from her absolutely necessary, I hope your lordship will provide her with the means of living in seclusion, that she may by a life of penance retrieve the past, and regain together with tranquillity of mind the esteem of the virtuous. Your lordship must excuse me if I speak thus plainly—fashionable vices in my opinion forming no plea with well-informed persons."

Lord S—— expressed his thanks for her good advice; declared he would act upon it on his return home; and after a few short remarks on the surrounding scenery took his leave, secretly exulting that he had so well extricated himself from this scrape.

Our young nobleman's mind was by no means in an enviable state;—to say the truth, he dreaded nothing so much as his own company: but that he was compelled to submit to for the present, being under

the necessity of making the remainder of his journey alone. It is likely his visit to the baronet would have been prolonged, but for a pressing letter he had received from his father, urging the necessity of his immediate return, in order to consult with the lawyers preparatory to his marriage, which was fixed to take place in August. He therefore had only time to take a cursory view of South Wales, it being now the close of June. As he rode along, he had very little opportunity of surveying the country, his thoughts being wholly engrossed by his own situation:—"I am about," said he mentally, "to marry Lady Sarah: the duke has no son; his eldest daughter has been married four years; his second three—both without issue: It is very probable that the dukedom may revive in my offspring. This would be fortunate: I shall be said to have the prettiest wife and the handsomest mistress of any man in England. Another enviable circumstance; I have only to contrive to keep Maria in the dark respecting

Lady Sarah: I was wrong in suffering her to go to London; it must be my business to remove her thence before I see my father. I'll look out a snug spot in Wales. She is, if I am not mistaken, in the way that all ladies wish to be who love their lords:—that will give her something to do; the more retired, the better she will like it. Poor innocent girl! to say her prayers, nurse her baby, and love me! will be all she will desire: and when the horrid fuss of matrimonial ceremony is over, I shall retire to make her happy—I would not exchange the affection of Maria for all the women in Christendom. Lady Sarah will have sufficient to take up her attention in supporting her dignity; she will scarcely miss me after the first fit of fondness is over: therefore I thus please myself, and do no injury to either. Maria could ill endure the frivolity of her own sex and the insolence of mine! Am I not kind, then, in consulting her happiness!"

Thus reasoned the thoughtless Lord S—;

whom we will leave on his journey, to resume Maria's account of herself, which she continued in the following words.

I arrived in London on the third morning after leaving Holywell, and took part of a ready furnished house in Sloane-street. As soon as I was settled I wrote to acquaint Lord S——, but received no answer from him; at which I was not so much surprised, his conduct lately having been unusually neglectful. However, I consoled myself with the prospect of becoming a mother, and thought the additional claim I should then have on his affections would insure his lasting attention. I took my usual walk to Warwick-street; and sometimes, though very seldom, was favoured with a call from Mr. Roper. Thus time passed on till the end of July; when Lord S—— once more made his appearance. I congratulated him sincerely on his arrival, for I never was more rejoiced to behold him. He answered my endearments by saying, "My heart, Maria, led me here, or my first

visit ought to have been in Cavendish-square. At Shrewsbury an express met me with the intelligence that my father had been seized with a paralytic stroke; I fear he may be dead—Have you heard any thing?

"Nothing at all:" I replied; "but do not delay a moment on my account. Should the earl be dead, pray contrive to let me know it: but I hope and trust you will find him better; in which case let me see you again as soon as possible."

"To-morrow, if my father be living, depend on seeing me," said Lord S——: and he hastened away.

On the morrow, the following note was delivered to my maid.

"My dearest love. My father's situation renders it impossible for me to quit this house at present:—last night he appeared much better; he evidently knew his family, and seemed greatly to wish to express something to me; but the blessing of speech has been denied him from the first attack. This morning he has again relapsed into

a lethargic state, and the physicians give up every hope; but as there is a manifest anxiety on his part to speak with me on some particular point, I would not for the world risk the being absent. This is indeed the most awful scene I have yet witnessed;—your affectionate sympathy alone will be necessary to soothe the heart of your truly affected

"CHARLES——."

As I did not hear from or see Lord S—— till after the burial of his father, I will close this parcel with an assurance of the gratitude with which I remain, madam, your obliged and grateful

MARIA.

The Earl of U—— departed this life on the fifth morning of his illness. The power of speech returned to him for some hours previous to his dissolution. The first use he made of it was to desire the countess to request the presence of Lady Sarah, with

her father. They promptly answered the summons:—when the earl called all his family around him; and taking his son's hand, "Charles," said the earl, "it was my earnest wish to have seen you and Lady Sarah united. It does not please God that I should. Lady Sarah," continued the earl, taking hold of her hand at the same time, "Do you love my son? and do you consent, before these witnesses, to become his wife?"

She answered "Yes, my lord, if he wishes it." Then turning to his son, "Charles," he said, "Do you love Lady Sarah above all other women? and will you be to her a faithful and tender husband?"

"I solemnly intend it," was his reply.

The earl then joining their hands, they knelt by his bed-side whilst he faintly said, "May Heaven bless you as you keep your engagements to each other! I make it my dying request that you solemnize the marriage as soon as decency will permit after my obsequies are performed." In a short time after, the earl lost all sense of recol-

lection, and remained in that state until he expired.

When the first emotions of grief had subsided, Lord S—— began to contemplate his peculiar situation. He felt how incumbent it was that he should speedily remove Maria to another part of the kingdom:—he thought his love increased for her in proportion as the time approached for his union with Lady Sarah—all his future happiness seemed to centre in her. He wished that she had boasted noble connexions, or at all events that he had never bound himself to espouse the duke's daughter. But the matter was now finally settled, and he had nothing to do but to submit to his fate.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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